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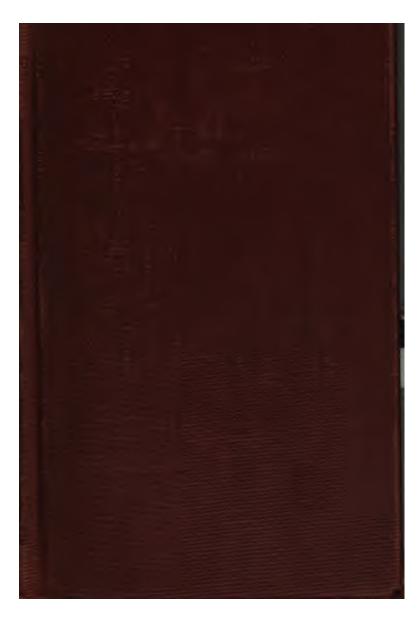
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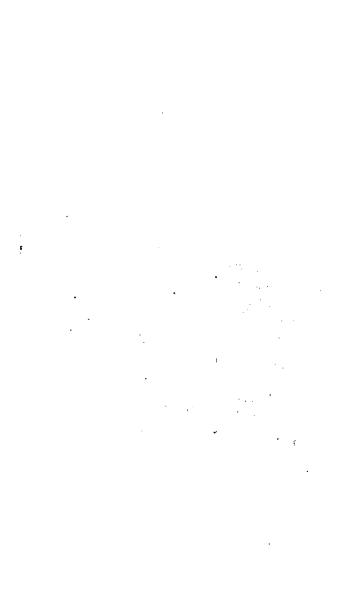




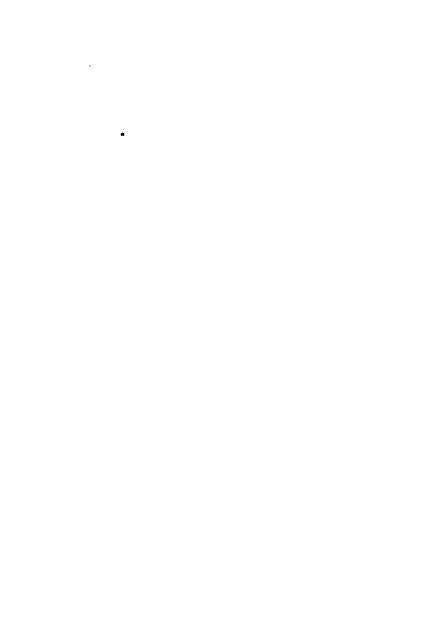


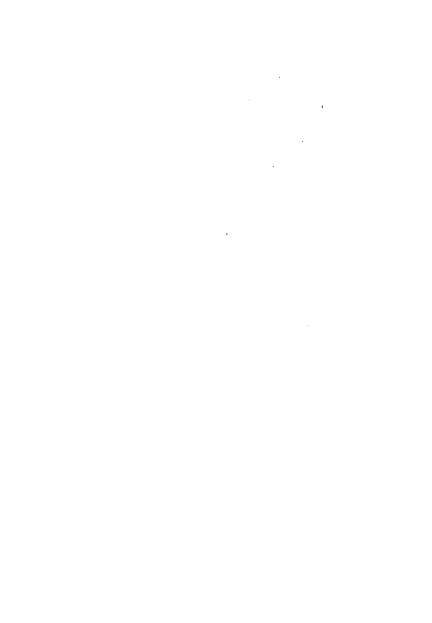
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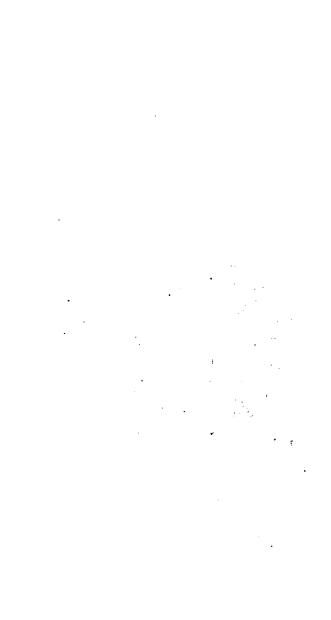
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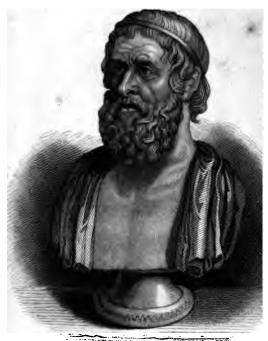


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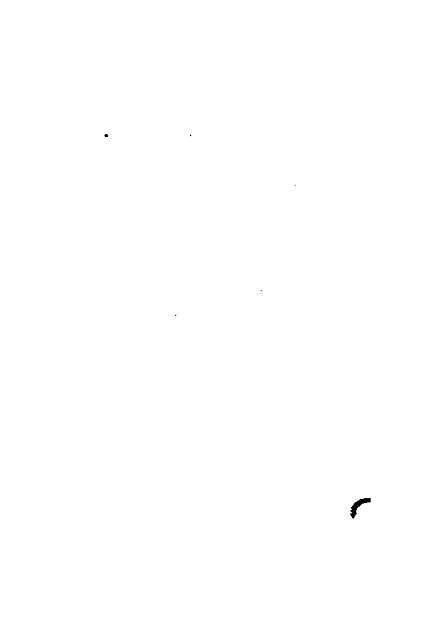


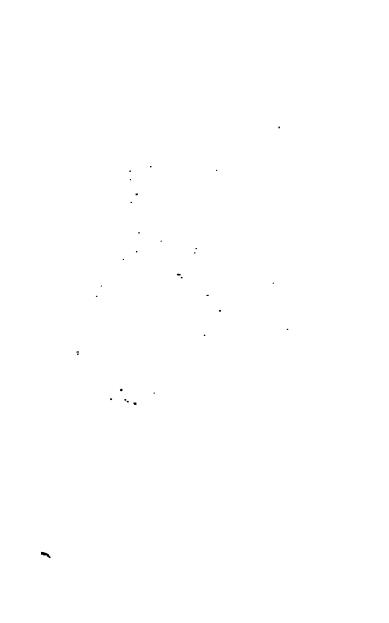


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SOPHOCLES.

Alaron : To dien





· SOPHOCLES.

TRANSLATED BY

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"This translation is remarkably close and concise, and the language is easy and natural, and suited to the sentiments. It a word, the English poet seems to have preserved that elegance and simplicity for which the Grecian is so deservedly admired."

—MONTHLY REVIEW.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

SOPHOCLES.

This excellent tragic writer was born at Colone, a village in Attica, about 497 years before Christ. Although his father Sophilus is said to have exercised the humble occupation of a blacksmith, he did not neglect the education of his son, who, while he gave early indications of extraordinary genius, and a remarkable aptitude for the higher branches of literature, at the same time cultivated the accomplishments of music and dancing, in both of which arts he failed not to distinguish himself, particularly after the battle of Salamis, when he led a chorus of youths round a trophy erected in honour of that victory.

As the profession of arms was, at that period, more honourable, and probably more advantageous, than any other, Sophocles entered the army at the usual age, and had the honour to serve under the great Pericles. His valour and conduct were here so conspicuous, that in a short time he was appointed to a high military dignity, and in several battles is reported to have shared in the supreme command.

of the Athenian armies with his former leader. His services in the field were rewarded by his fellow-citizens, who raised him to the high office of archon, the duties of which he executed with credit and honour.

The first appearance of Sophocles as a dramatic writer left no room for doubting the splendour of his talents. The Athenians had captured the island of Scyros, and, in order to celebrate that memorable event, a yearly contest for tragedy was instituted. Sophocles, on this occasion, although he was but twenty-nine years of age, obtained the prize over many experienced competitors, in the number of whom was Æschylus, his former friend and preceptor.

He was less fortunate in domestic life than in His children, disappointed in his public career. their eager wishes for his death, and solicitous for the immediate possession of his fortune, summoned him before the judges, at a very advanced age, representing him as in a state of dotage, and utterly incapable of conducting his affairs. The old man appeared in court to repel this charge; and producing the tragedy of Œdipus Coloneus, which he had just finished, asked his judges if the author of such a work could be justly taxed with insanity. The judges, indignant at the imputation which had been preferred against him, confirmed him in the possession of his rights: his ungrateful children were covered with shame and confusion; and all the people who were present conducted him home in triumph. His death, at the age of ninety-one, 408 years before the Christain era, is said to have been occasioned by excessive joy at obtaining a prize at the Olympic games.

Sophocles is supposed to have written one hundred and twenty tragedies, only seven of which are now remaining: these were received by his contemporaries with that applause which they so well deserved. It is remarked, that he never acted himself in any of his plays, as Æschylus and Euripides were accustomed to do, his voice being too weak and low for the stage; though he was always present at the representation, and received the applauses of the audience, who, we are told, seldom failed to signify their approbation, both at his entering and quitting the theatre. He was crowned twenty times; and though he probably sometimes shared the fate of his brother poets by unjust censure, could never be prevailed on, as his rivals were, to quit his native country, to which he took every opportunity of showing his sincerest attachment.

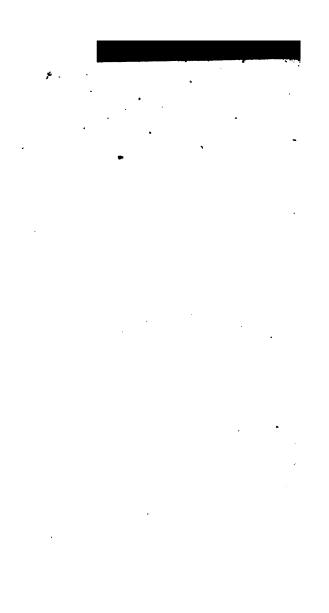
The drama is indebted to this great man for the introduction of a third speaker to the dialogue, into which his genius infused greater ease and elegance; to this improvement he likewise added the decoration of painted scenery, and paid a stricter attention to probability and natural incident. The Athenians erected a sumptuous monument to his memory, on which was engraved a swarm of bees, in allusion to the name generally given him on account of his verses, which are, indeed, wonderfully soft and harmonious.

So just an estimate of the merits of Sophocles is

formed by the learned and elegant writer whose translation is here adopted, that we cannot better conclude this brief sketch than in presenting it to our readers.

"Sophocles," says Dr. Francklin, "may with great truth be called the prince of ancient dramatic poets: his fables (at least, of all those tragedies now extant) are interesting and well chosen; his plots regular and well conducted; his sentiments elegant, noble, and sublime; his incidents natural; his diction simple; his manners and characters striking, equal, and unexceptionable; his choruses well adapted to the subject; his moral reflections pertinent and useful; and his numbers, in every part, to the last degree sweet and harmonious. warmth of his imagination is so tempered by the perfection of his judgment, that his spirit, however animated, never wanders into licentiousness; while, at the same time, the fire of his genius seldom suffers the most uninteresting parts of his tragedy to sink into coldness and insipidity. His peculiar excellence seems to lie in the descriptive; and, exclusive of his dramatic powers, he is certainly a greater poet than either of his illustrious rivals. Were I to draw a similitude of him from painting. I should say that his ordonnance was so just, his figures so well grouped and contrasted, his colours so glowing and natural; all his pieces, in short, executed in so bold and masterly a style, as to wrest the palm from every other hand, and point him out as the Raphael of the ancient drama."





A J A X.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MINERVA.
ULYSSES.
AJAX.
TECHESSA, wife of AJAX.
TEUDER, brother to AJAX.
AGAMEMNON.
MENELAUS.
MESSENGER.
CHORUS, composed of ancient men of Salamis.

AJAX.

ARGUMENT.

AFTER the death of Achilles, the Greeks published their in tention of bestowing the arms of their deceased hero on that chief who had rendered the greatest services to the common cause. Ajax and Ulysses each prosecuted their claims for this honour, which were decided in favour of the latter by the casting vote of Menelaus. Ajax, frantic with disappointment, and instigated by Minerva, slaughtered a whole flook of sheep, supposing them to be the sons of Atreus; and, after his recovery from delirium, stabbed himself through grief. His half-brother, Teucer, to whom he was tenderly attached, was about to bestow on him the usual rites of sepulture, when he was interrupted by Agamemnon and Menelaus, who sternly insisted that the body of Ajax should remain unburied, in revenge for their intended murder. Teucer, however, persevered in his pious design, and defied the power of the two princes; when Ulyssee, by his influence, persuaded Agamemnon to remit the penalty, and to suffer Teucer to bury the body of Ajax without farther molestation.

ACT I.

Scene,—a field near the camp of Ajax.
MINERVA, ULYSSES.

Min. Son of Laertes, thy unwearied spirit
Is ever watchful to surprise the foe.
I have observed thee wandering mid the tents
In search of Ajax, where his station lies,
At the atmost verge, measuring o'er his steps
But late impress'd: like Sparta's hounds of scent,

6 The dogs of Sparta were remarkable for their swiftness and quick scant:

Born.—B

Sagacious dost thou trace him, nor in vain;
For know, the man thou seek'st is not far from thee
Yonder he lies, with reeking brow and hands
Deep-stain'd with gore: cease then thy search, and
tell me
Wherefore thou comest, that so I may inform
Thy doubting mind, and best assist thy purpose.
ULYS. Minerva, dearest of the immortal powers!
(For, though I see thee not, that well-known voice
Doth like the Tyrrhene trump awake my soul.) 15
Right hast thou said, I come to search my foe,
Shield-bearing Ajax; him alone I seek:
A deed of horror hath he done this night,
If it be he; for yet we are to know
The certain proof, and therefore came I here
A willing messenger: the cattle all,
Our flocks and herds, are, with their shepherds.
slain!
To Ajax every tongue imputes the crime:
One of our spies, who saw him on the plain,
His sword still reeking with fresh blood, confirm'd
it: 25
Instant I fled to search him, and sometimes
I trace his footsteps, which again I lose,
I know not how. In happy hour thou comest
To aid me, goddess; thy protecting hand
Hath ruled me ever, and to thee I trust 39
My future fate.
Min. I know it well, Ulysses,
And therefore came to guard and to assist thee,
Propitious to thy purpose.
ULYS. Do I right,
My much-lov'd mistress ?
Min. Doubtless; his foul deed
Doth well deserve it.
ULYS. What could prompt his hand 35
To such a desperate act !
Min. Achilles' arms;
His rage for loss of them.

But wherefore thus ULYS. Destroy the flock? 'Twas in your blood he thought His hands were stain'd. Against the Grecians, then, ULYS. Was all his wrath? And fatal had it proved 40 To them, if I had not prevented it. ULYS. What daring insolence could move his soul To such a deed? Min. Alone by night he wander'd In secret to attack you. Did he come ULYS. Close to our tents! Even to the double portal. 45 Where rest your chiefs. What power could then withhold His maddening hand? I purposely deceived His sight, and saved him from the guilty joy, Turning his rage against the mingled flocks, Your gather'd spoil: on these with violence He rush'd, and slaughter'd many: now he thought That he had slain the Atridæ, now believed Some other chiefs had perished by his hand. I saw his madness, and still urged him on, That he might fall into the snare I laid. 55 Tired with his slaughter, now he binds in chains The living victim, drives the captive herd Home to his tent, nor doubts but they are men: There beats with many a stripe the helpless foe. But I will show thee this most glaring phrensy. That to the Grecians what thy eyes beheld Thou mayst report: be confident, nor fear His utmost malice; I shall turn his sight Askant from thee. Ajax! what, ho! come forth! Thou, who dost bind in chains thy captive foes; 65 Ajax, I say, come forth before the portal! ULYS. What wouldst thou do, Minerya? Do not call him.

Mrn. What should Ulysses fear? ULYS. O! by the rode I do entreat thee, let him stay within. Min. But wherefore! Thou hast seen him here before. ULYS. He ever was, and is, my deadliest foe. Min. O! but to laugh an enemy to scorn Is mirth most grateful. ULYS. I had rather still He came not here. And art thou then afraid To see a madman? I should little dread 75 The sight of Ajax in his better mind. Min. He will not see thee, be thou e'er so near. ULYS. Impossible! his eyes are still the same. Mrs. But I shall throw a veil of darkness o'er them. Ulys. By powers immortal all things may be 80 Min. Wait then in silence till he comes. I will; And vet, 'twere better to retire. What, ho! Min. Ajax, again I call thee; wherefore pay'st thou

AJAX, MINERVA, ULYSSES.

So little reverence to thy guardian power?

AJAX. Hail to the daughter of great Jove! to thee, Minerva, hail! thou comest in happy hour; 86 For I will crown thee with the golden spoils, Which I have gain'd by thy assisting hand.

Min. Well hast thou spoke; but say, has Ajax dipp'd
His spear in Grecian blood!

82 Sophocles has closely copied his great master, Homer, in the character of Ulysses, who is drawn by them both as a man of extraordinary prudence and circumspection, with more caution than courage, and more cunning than generosity.

AJAX.--AOT L

Ajav.	It is my boast;	90
I'll not deny it.	,	
	d the Atridæ feel	
Thy vengeful arm	1	J.
ÁJAX.	They never will again	٧.
Dishonour Ajax.	,	
	I understand thee,	
They are both dea	ıd.	
Ajax.	They are; now let them	come
And take my arms	away.	
Min.	But tell me, Ajax;	95
Laertes' son, hath	he escaped thy wrath !	
AJAX. Talk'st th	ou of him, that fox accurs	ed !
Min.		I mean
Thy foe, Ulysses.		
AJAX.	O! he is my captive,	
The fairest of my	spoils; I have him here;	
He shall not perisl	h yet.	
Min.	What 'vantage then	100
Mean'st thou to dr	aw from his confinement?	
Ajax.		First,
I'll have him bound	d to the pillar.	
Min.	And what th	en
Wouldst thou inflic	ct ?	
Ajax.	His limbs all purpled	o'er
With many a blood	ly strife, he shall be slain.	
Min. Do not tori		
Ajax.	In all things els	se, 10 5
Minerva, would I g		
	lone, must be his fate.	
	so pleasing to thee, be it so),
Nor quit thy purpo	se.	
Ajax.	I must to my work;	
	va, mayst thou ever smile	110
Propitious on me,	and assist thy Ajax!	[Exit.

MINERVA, ULYSSES.

Mix. Behold, Ulysses, here the mighty strength B2

Of power divine; lived there a man more wise. More famed for noble deeds, than Ajax was ! ULYS. None, none indeed; alas! I pity him; 115 Ev'n in a foe I pity such distress, For he is wedded to the worst of woes: His hapless state reminds me of my own, And tells me that frail mortals are no more Than a vain image and an empty shade. 120 Min. Let such examples teach thee to beware Against the gods thou utter aught profane: And if perchance in riches or in power Thou shinest superior, be not insolent: For, know, a day sufficeth to exalt 195 Or to depress the state of mortal man: The wise and good are by the gods beloved, But those who practise evil they abhor. [Exeunt.

CHORUS. To thee, O Ajax, valiant son Of illustrious Telamon, 130 Monarch of the sea-girt isle, Fair Salamis, if Fortune smile On thee, I raise the tributary song, For praise and virtue still to thee belong; But when, inflicted by the wrath of Jove, 135 Grecian slander blasts thy fame. And foul reproach attaints thy name, Then do I tremble like the fearful dove. So the last unhappy night, Clamours loud did reach mine ear 140 And filled my anxious heart with fear.

Clamours loud did reach mine ear
And filled my anxious heart with fear,
Which talk'd of Grecian cattle slain,
And Ajax maddening o'er the plain,
Pleased at his prey, rejoicing at the sight.

129 The chorus is formed, with great propriety, of Salami nian soldiers, the countrymen and followers of Ajax, who, having heard the report, already spread through the army, of Ajax's madness, and the slaughter of the cattle, express the deepest concern for their unhappy master.

Thus false Ulysses can prevail,
Whispering to all his artful tale,
His tale, alas! too willingly received;
While those who hear are glad to know,
And happy to insult thy wo;
For, who asperse the great are easily believed.

The poor, like us, alone are free From the darts of calumny. While envy still attends on high estate: Small is the aid which we can lend Without the rich and powerful friend: The great support the low, the low assist the great; But 'tis a truth which fools will never know. From such alone the clamours came Which strove to hurt thy spotless fame, 159 While we can only weep, and not believe thy wo. Happy to 'scape thy piercing sight, Behold them wing their rapid flight, As trembling birds from hungry vultures fly: Sudden again shouldst thou appear, The cowards would be mute with fear. 165

Cynthia, goddess of the grove,
Daughter of immortal Jove,
To whom at Tauris frequent altars rise,
Indignant might inspire the deed,
And bid the guiltless cattle bleed,
Deprived of incense due, and wonted sacrifice,
Perhaps, sad cause of all our grief and shame!
The god of war, with brazen shield,
For fancied injuries in the field.

And all their censures in a moment die.

For fancied injuries in the field, 175 Might thus avenge the wrong, and brand thy name:

For, never, in his perfect mind,
Had Ajax been to ill inclined:
On flocks and herds his rage had never spent:
It was inflicted from above.
May Phæbus and all-powerful Jove
Avert the crime, or stop the punishment!

If to the Atridæ the bold fiction came
From Sisyphus' detested race,
No longer, Ajax, hide thy face,
But from thy tents come forth, and vindicate thy
fame.

Ajax, thy too long repose
Adds new vigour to thy foes,
As flames from aiding winds still fiercer grow;
While the loose laugh, and shameless lie, 190
And all their bitter calumny,
With double weight oppress, and fill our hearts
with wo.

ACT IL

TECMESSA, CHORUS.

TEC. Sons of Erectheus, of Athenian race, Ye brave companions of the valiant Ajax, Oppress'd with grief behold a wretched woman, 192 Far from her native soil, appointed here To watch your hapless lord, and mourn his fate.

Cно. What new misfortune hath the night brought forth?

Say, daughter of Teleutas! for with thee,
His captive bride, the noble Ajax deigns 200
To share the nuptial bed; and therefore thou
Canst best inform us.

184 Or, in other words, from Ulysses, whom the chorus meam to reproach as the reputed son of Sisyphus.

193 Erectheus is reported to have been the offspring of Vulcar and the earth; and from him the Athenians boasted their descent Salamis was not far from Athens; Sophocles therefore saluter the followers of Ajax by the name of Athenians. For joining the inhabitants of Salamis to the Athenians, Sophocles had the authority of Homer.

199 Teleutas was a petty king in Phrygia, whose dominions being taken and plundered by Aiax, his daughter, Tecmessa, became the victor's captive, and by her he had a son named Eury.

saces.

TEC. How shall I declare,
Sadder than death, the unutterable wo!
This night, with madness seized, hath Ajax done
A dreadful deed: within thou mayst behold 205
The tents o'erspread with bloody carcasses
Of cattle slain, the victims of his rage.

Cно. Sad news indeed thou bring'st of that brave man:

A dire disease, and not by human aid
To be removed; already Greece hath heard, 210
And wondering crowds repeat the dreadful tible.
Alas! I fear the event: I fear me much,
Lest (with their flocks and herds the shepherds
slain)

Against himself he lift his murderous hand.

TEC. Alas! this way he led his captive spoils, 215
And some he slew, and others tore in sunder:
From out the flock two rams of silver hue
He chose; from one the head and tongue divided,
He cast them from him; then the other, chain'd
Fast to the pillar, with a doubled rein
Bore cruel stripes, and bitterest execrations,
Which not from mortal came, but were inspired
By that avenging god who thus torments him.

Cно. Now then, my friends (for so the time demands).

Each o'er his head should cast the mournful veil, 225
And instant fly, or to our ships repair,
And sail with speed; for dreadful are the threats
Of the Atridæ; death may be our lot,
And we shall meet an equal punishment

With him whom we lament, our frantic lord. 230
Tro. He raves not now; but, like the southern
blast.

When lightnings cease and all the storm is o'er, Grows calm again; yet, to his sense restored, He feels new griefs: for, O! to be unhappy, And know ourselves alone the guilty cause Of all our sorrows, is the worst of woes.

Cho. Yet if his rage subside, we should rejoice: The ill removed, we should remove our care.

TEC. Hadst thou then rather, if the choice were

given,

Thyself at ease, behold thy friend in pain, 240
Than with thy friend be join'd in mutual sorrow?
Cho. The double grief is sure the most oppressive.
Trc. Therefore, though not distemper'd, I am wretched.

Сно. I understand thee not.

TEC. The noble Ajax,
While he was mad, was happy in his phrensy,
And yet the while affected me with grief
Who was not so; but now his rage is o'er,
And he has time to breathe from his misfortune,
Himself is almost dead with grief, and I
Not less unhappy than I was before.

250
Is it not double, then?

Сно. It is indeed;
And much I fear the wrath of angry Heaven,
If from his madness ceased he yet receive
No kind relief.

TEC. 'Tis so; and 'twere most fit You knew it well.

Cho. Say then how it began; 255
For, like thyself, we feel for his misfortunes.
The. Since you partake the sorrows of a friend,

TEC. Since you partake the sorrows of a friend,
I'll tell you all: know then, at dead of night,
What time the evening tapers were expired,
Snatching his sword, he seem'd as if he meant
To roam abroad: I saw and chid him for it:
"What wouldst thou do," I cried, "my dearest Ajax?
Unask'd, uncall'd for, whither wouldst thou go?
No trumpet sounds to battle; the whole host
Is wrapp'd in sleep." Then did he answer me
265
With brief but sharp rebuke, as he was wont,—
"Woman, thy sex's noblest ornament
Is silence." Thus reproved, I said no more;
Then forth he rush'd alone, where, and for what,

I knew not; but returning, he brought home, In chains the captive herd: in pieces some	270
He tore, while others, bound like slaves, he last	h'd
Indignant; then out at the portal ran,	
And with some shadow seem'd to hold discours	e:
Against the Atridæ and Ulysses oft	275
Would he inveigh; or, laughing loud, rejoice	
That he had ta'en revenge for all his wrongs:	
Then back he came. At length, by slow degree	es,
His phrensy ceased; when, soon as he beheld	
The tents o'erwhelm'd with slaughter, he cried	out,
And beat his brain; roll'd o'er the bloody heaps	281
Of cattle slain, and tore his clotted hair,	
Long fixed in silence: then, with horrid threats	j _e
He bade me tell him all that had befallen,	
And what he had been doing: I obey'd,	285
Trembling with fear, and told him all I knew.	
Instant he poured forth bitterest lamentations,	
Such as I ne'er had heard from him before;	
For grief like that, he oft would say, betray'd A weak and little mind; and therefore ever.	000
When sorrow came, refrain'd from loud complaints	290
And, like the lowing heifer, inly mourn'd.	me j
But sinking now beneath this sore distress,	
He will not taste of food or nourishment;	
Silent he sits, amid the slaughter'd cattle;	295
Or, if he speaks, utters such dreadful words	200
As show a mind intent on something ill.	
Now then, my friends (for therefore came I hitl	ner).
O! if ye have the power, assist me now:	,,
Perhaps ye may; for oft the afflicted man	300
Will listen to the counsels of a friend.	
Сно. O daughter of Teleutas, horrible	
Indeed thy tidings are of noble Ajax,	
Thus raving, and thus miserable.	•
AJAX. [within, groans.] 0!	
TEC. Louder you'll hear him soon. Mark'd ye	
friends,	305
How deep his grooms ?	

friends,
How deep his groans?

AJAX. [within.] O me!

Cho. He seems to rave, Or mourns, reflecting on his madness pass'd.

AJAX. [within.] Boy! boy!

TEC. Alas! he calls Eurysaces,
Where art thou, child! What would he have with
thee!

AJAX. [within.] Teucer, 'tis thee I call; where art thou, Teucer? 310

Still must he chase his prey, while Max dies!

CHO. He seems of perfect mind: open the doors; Let him come forth. Who knows but sight of us May keep him so?

TEC. I'll open them: now see

[The doors are thrown open and Ajax discoveres. Your master there, and judge of his condition. 315

AJAX, TECMESSA, CHORUS.

AJAX. My dear companions, who alone deserve The name of friends, ye see the dreadful storm How it o'erwhelms me.

Cho. What thou saidst, alas! [aside to Tecmessa. Was but too true: he seems indeed distracted.

AJAX. My fellow-sailors! whose assisting hand Plied the tough oar, and led me through the main; 391 From you alone can I expect to meet Or love or friendship; therefore show it now, And kill me.

Cho. Talk not thus, nor thus increase By added wees thy dreadful malady. 325

AJAX. Dost thou behold this once intrepid Ajax,
The brave, the mighty, long for strength renown'd,
And dauntless courage in the bloody field;—
Dost thou behold him? O, what laughter now,
What vile reproach must he sustain!

Trc. O Ajax, 330
My lord, my master, do not talk thus sadly.

AJAX. [to Tecmessa.] Wilt thou not home? Wilt not be gone?

TEC.

O me! Cho. Be patient; by the gods, let me entreat thee, Be more composed.

Wretch that I was, to let Ajax. The cursed Atrids 'scape, and shed the blood Of harmless cattle!

CHO. But why sorrow thus For what is past, and cannot be recalled!

AJAX. How will that subtle instrument of ill, Laertes' prying son, insult me now,

And smile at my misfortunes!

That must be Сно. As seems most fitting to the gods; from them Or grief or joy must flow.

O. would to Heaven AJAX.

That I could see him, wretched as I am! CHO. This is no time for boasting: see'st thou not How very weak thou art?

Ajax. Almighty Jove! 345 My great progenitor! O grant me this: Grant me to slay that hateful, talking slave. With the proud princes; then, well pleased, myself Should perish last.

TEC. O! if thou pray'st for death. Pray too for mine; for wherefore should I live 350 When thou art gone!

O darkness, my best light Ajax. And hope! O wrap me in thy friendly shade, A willing guest! I dare not look for help, Or from the gods above, or men below: The powerful daughter of eternal Jove 355 To death devotes me. Whither can I fly. Or where remain, my fame and glory lost In this sad phrensy ! left without a friend. And the whole army bent on my destruction!

³⁴⁶ Ajax was the son of Telamon, the son of Æacus, the son of Jove: Jupiter therefore was his great-grandfather. SOPH.—C

Trc. Alas! how dreadful 'tis to hear such words, Which Ajax never would have spoke before! 361 AJAX. Ye well-known floods that roll into the main!

Ye caves and forests by the rocky shore!
Years heap'd on years, fast by the walls of Troy
Have ye detain'd me; but no longer now
365
Among the living shall ye ever see
The hapless Ajax. This remember all:
Nor shall thy neighbouring waves, Scamander, still
To Greece beneficent, behold me more:
Troy never saw (forgive the boastful word!)
A braver, nobler foe than Ajax was,
Though now dishonour'd thus, and thus oppress'd.

CHO. I would not have thee thus lament thy woes, And yet I know not how to chide thee for it,

So hard thy lot.

Who would have thought my name Ajax. Would e'er so well have suited my condition! 376 O! I have reason to lament indeed. For sure there is not such a wretch as Ajax! Long since at Troy my valiant father fought, And to his native land, with glory crown'd, 380 Bore back the meed of his distinguish'd virtues: Nor less renown'd for gallant deeds was once His hapless son, though now he perish thus Inglorious: yet Achilles, well I know, 385 Were he alive, and to bestow his arms On him who best deserved the prize, to me, And me alone, would judge the great reward: But little deemed the Atridæ worth like mine, And therefore gave them to that vile impostor, Author of every evil work, Ulysses. 390 Had not my mind been wrought on by some power Superior, and my eyes averted from them,

375 To know the meaning of this passage, the reader should understand Greck; it being nothing more than a poor pun or the name of Ajax, which in the original begins with Ai, an eclamation like our O! expressive of pain and sorrow.

They had not lived to give another sentence: But Jove's great daughter, the invincible. The dreadful Pallas, turn'd my arm aside, 395 Just raised against them, and inspired me thus With horrid rage to dip my murderous hand In blood of guiltless cattle; they, meantime, Smile at the danger 'scaped, and triumph o'er me; But, when the gods oppose us, valour bends To cowardice, and strength to weakness yields: What then can Ajax, hateful to the gods, By Troy detested, and by Greece forsaken? Shall I go leave the Atride here alone To fight their cause, and seek my native land! 405 But how shall I appear before my father. How will he bear to see his Alax thus Spoiled of his honours,—he who ever crown'd With glory sits? It must not, cannot be. What if I rush amid the Trojan host, 410 And with my single arm oppose them all: Do something noble, and as nobly perish! But that would please the Atridæ; therefore never Shall it be done. No, I will do a deed, To show my father that I still deserve 415 The name of son, and emulate my sire. When life but teems with unremitted woes, 'Tis poor in man to wish a longer date: For what can day on day, and year on year, But put off wish'd-for death, and lengthen pain! 420 Of little worth is he who still depends On fruitless hope; for it becomes the brave To live with honour, or to die with glory! Ye have my thoughts.

Cho. Thoughts not unworthy of thee, Ajax; but quit, O! quit thy horrid purpose, 425 And yield thee to thy friends.

TEC. My lord, my master,
My dearest Ajax, dreadful are the ills
Which cruel Fortune brings on human kind.
Of noblest race (a better Phrygia boasts not)
Tecmessa was, and from a father sprung,

430

Happy and free, though now a wretched slave: For so the gods and thy all-conquering arm Decreed: but since, partaker of thy bed. Thou knowest I ever have with tenderest care Watch'd o'er thee; therefore, by domestic Jove! 435 Here I entreat thee, by the sacred tie That binds us, let me not with foul reproach And bitter scorn be taunted by thy foes. When they surround me, as I know they will: For, O! when thou shalt die, that very day 440 The Greeks with violence will seize on me: Tecmessa, then, and thy loved son, shall eat The bread of slavery; then some haughty lord. Insulting loud, shall cry, "Behold the wife Of Ajax, once the pride of all our host! How is she fallen from envied happiness To servitude and wo!" Such vile upbraidings Oft shall I hear, on thee and on thy race Casting foul shame. O, then, relent, my Ajax! Think on thy father in the vale of years: 450 Think on thy aged mother, who with vows Incessant prays the gods to send thee back Safe to thy native land; pity thy son, Without a father in his tender youth To form his mind, left to the unfriendly hands 455 Of those who love him not. Alas! what woes Wilt thou bequeath to me and to thy child! I have no hope, no stay, but thee alone! Thy hand destroy'd my country and my mother; Death snatch'd my father to the realms below: 460 Deprived of thee, what country will receive me, Or where shall I subsist? Thou art my all, My only safeguard: do not, do not leave me! Naught so becomes a man as gratitude For good received, and noble deeds are still 465 The offspring of benevolence: while he With whom remembrance dies of blessings past. Is vile and worthless. CHO. O, that thou couldst feel

Pity like mine for this unhappy woman!

Then wouldst thou say her words deserve thy praise.

AJAX. And praised she shall be, if she but perform

What I require.

Trc. In all I will obey thee,

My dearest Ajax!

AJAX. I would see my child;

Let him be brought.

TEC. I hid him from thy sight

Because of-

AJAX. My distemper, was it not? 475
TEC. It was: I fear'd, indeed, thou mightst destroy him.

AJAX. And well thou mightst: a deed like that became

My sad condition.

TEC. Therefore, to prevent it,

I kept him from thee.

AJAX. I approve thy caution. TEC. What wouldst thou have me do?

AJAX. Let me behold 480

And speak to him.

Ajax.

TEC. He is not far from hence;

The servants have him in their care.

Then why

May I not see him?

 $\mathbf{\tilde{T}_{EC}}$. Boy! thy father calls thee;

Let some one bring him hither.

AJAX. Is he coming?

Doth he not hear thee!

TEC. They have brought him to thee. 485 (Enter servants with Eurysaces.

EURYSACES, TECMESSA, AJAX, CHORUS.

AJAX. Bring him this way; for if he be the son Of Ajax, the fresh blood that hangs about me Will not affright him: he must learn, like me, In earliest years the savage laws of war, And be inured to scenes of death and slaughter.

Mayst thou, my boy, be happier than thy father! In all things else it will be no disgrace To copy me. I envy thee, my child. For that thou seest not thy own wretchedness: The happiness of life is not to know. 495 Thy ignorance will keep thee free from pain, Till time shall teach thee what it is to grieve And to rejoice; then must thou show thy foes From whom thou art descended. May the breath. Of life, meantime, nourish thy tender frame, That thou mayst prove a comfort to thy mother! I know there's not a Grecian that will dare Insult thee, when thy father is no more; For I shall leave thee to the best of guardians, The faithful Teucer, who, far from thee now, 505 Sent forth by Greece, repels the invading foe. Of you, my friends, companions of the war, The only boon I ask is, that ye urge This last request to Teucer; say, I begg'd That straight to Telamon and Eribæa. 510 My aged parents, he would bear my child, To be the joy of their declining years, Till death shall call them to the shades below. Let not my arms by Greece, or by that plague, Ulvsses, e'er be made the prize of glory 515 For rival chiefs: but do thou take, my boy, [Turning to Eurysaces.

The seven-fold, vast, impenetrable shield,
Whose name thou bear'st; the rest be buried with me.
Take hence the child with speed; nor in the tents
Let there be wailings: women ever love 520
To brood o'er sorrows, and indulge their wo.
Shut to the door. The wound that must be cut
No wise physician will attempt to heal
With incantation, elegy, or song.

518 The name of Eurysaces is derived from two Greek words, signifying "a broad shield." The custom of burying the arms of deceased warriors in the same grave with them is very ancient, and is practised among the Indians at this day.

Cno. I tremble when I hear thee threatening thus With sharp and piercing voice.

Tec. Alas! my lord, 526

What wilt thou do !

AJAX. Guess not; inquire not of me;

Be silent, and be wise; it will become thee.

Tro. How am I tortured! by the godit; I beg thee, By our dear child, do not destroy us both. 530 AJAX. Thou dost perplex me. Why revere the

gods !

I am not bound to it, for I owe them nothing.

TEC. Be not so impious.

AJAX.

Talk to those will hear thee.

TEC. Art thou resolved then?

AJAX. "Tis too much; thy grief

Grows troublesome.

TEC. Alas! my lord, I fear— 535

AJAX. [to the chorus.] Will ye not take her hence!

TEC. O! by the gods

I beg thee, be persuaded.

AJAX. Thou art mad

To think thy words will ever change my purpose.

Exeunt.

ODE. -- CHORUS.

STROPHE.

O happiest, best abode, my native isle, Fair Salamis, encompass'd by the sea,

On thee while gods and men indulgent smile, My country, O behold and pity me!

A long, long time on Ida's plain,
Thus doom'd inglorious to remain,

While circling years roll o'er my wretched head: 545

New terrors still affright me here; Still is my heart appall'd with fear,

Lest I should visit soon the mansions of the dead.

The woes of Ajax too imbitter mine,

The bravest leader of the Grecian host,

550

540

Untimely visited by wrath divine, And in the desperate, cruel phrensy lost. There was a time when, sent by thee, He gain'd the wreath of victory, Though now his weeping friends lament his fall. 555 The ungrateful chiefs revere no more The virtues they admired before: His gallant deeds are now forgotten all. STROPHE II. Weigh'd down with years, when thou, in hoary age, Unhappy mother, shalt these tidings hear 560 Of the dear Ajax, and his cruel rage, How wilt thou weep and wail with grief sincere! Not like the plaintive nightingale That warbles sweet her tender tale. But with loud shricks of horrible despair: 565 With sharpest anguish sore oppress'd Then shalt thou beat thy aged breast, And in deep sorrow rend thy wild dishevell'd hair.

ANTISTROPHE II.

*Tis better far to die, than, hopeless still
Of cure, to languish under sore disease;
When mortals suffer such distinguish'd ill,
The silent tomb is liberty and ease.
Ajax, the pride of all our host,
His ancient fame and glory lost,

Sinks down at last o'erwhelm'd with foul disgrace:

How will his hapless father bear

His son's distressful fate to hear,

576

Ev'n such as never fell on Æacus' race.

ACT III.

AJAX, TECMESSA, CHORUS.

AJAX. Still are the secret things of man reveal'd,
And what is known, again in darkness hid,
By endless and immeasurable time;
And nothing is there, but in length and days
May come to pass: ev'n sacred oaths are broken;

And the fix'd mind, perverse and obstinate, Subdued by time. I, who like harden'd steel 585 Was late inflexible, am softened now To pity and remorse by this dear woman: 1 cannot bear to leave her here a widow Amid her foes, or to forsake my child, A helpless orphan. No; I will retire 590 Along the shore, and seek the running stream. Avert the wrath of angry Heaven, and wash My crimes away; there haply shall I find Some unfrequented spot where I may hide This fatal weapon, this destructive sword. 595 O! I will bury it deep in earth, that none May see it more: but Night and Erebus Preserve it still from every mortal eye. E'er since that hapless day when from the hand Of Hector I received this dreadful boon. 600 Naught have I had from Greece but pain and wo: True is the adage, "From the hands of foes Gifts are not gifts, but injuries most fatal." Hereafter will I yield me to the gods And the Atridæ: since they are my masters, 605 Tis meet that I obey them: all that is strong And mighty must submit to powers superior. Doth not the snowy winter to the bloom Of fruitful summer yield? and night obscure, When by white steeds Aurora drawn, lights up 610 The rising day, submissively retire? The roaring sea, long vex'd by angry winds. Is lull'd by milder zephyrs to repose; And oft the fetters of all-cong'ring sleep Are kindly loosed to free the captive mind. 615 From Nature, then, who thus instructs mankind, Why should not Ajax learn humility! Long since I knew to treat my foe like one Whom I hereafter as a friend might love. If he deserved it: and to love my friend 620 As if he still might one day be my foe: For little is the trust we can repose

i

In human friendships: but to my intent.
Go thou, Tecmessa, and beseech the gods
To grant what I request; do you perform
The same kind office; and when Teucer comes,
Tell him the care of me and of my friends
I leave to him: whither I must, I must.
Obey my orders: wretched as I am,
Soon shall ye see me freed from all my woes.

630

[Execut.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Now let sounds of mirth and joy Every blissful hour employ: Borne on pleasure's airy wing. Io Pan! to thee we sing: Thee, whom on the rocky shore, 635 Wreck-'scaped mariners adore, Skill'd the mazy dance to lead: Teach, O! teach our feet to tread The round which Cretan Cnossus knows. At Nyssa, which spontaneous rose, 640 Pan, O! guide this tuneful throng, While to thee we raise the song From Cyllene's snowy brow: King of pleasures, hear us now! From thy mountains, O! appear: Joy and happiness are here: And do thou, O Delian king, Now thy aid propitious bring! O! from the Icarian sea, Come, Apollo, smile on me, 650 ANTISTROPHE. All our sorrows now are o'er; Grief and madness are no more: See, the happy day appears, Mighty Jove! that ends our fears. Let us, free from every care, 655

Gladly to our ships repair;

Ajax now in sweet repose Sinks, forgetful of his woes: Humbly to the gods resigned, He devotes his better mind: 660 Time, that withers, can restore Human pleasures: now no more Must we say our vows are vain: Naught unhoped for should remain; Since, beyond our wishes, see 665 Ajax from his madness free: 'Gainst th' Atridæ all his rage See how milder thoughts assuage. Bitter strife and quarrels cease; All is harmony and peace. 670 🥆

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

Mrs. My friends, I bear you news of highest import:

From Mysia's rocky mountains hither comes
The noble Teucer: know, ev'n now I saw him
Amid the Grecian host, who, as he came,
Surrounded, and on every side pour'd forth
Reproaches on him: not a man but cried,
"Behold the brother of that frantic foe
To Greece and to her council." Such their rage
That they had well-nigh stoned him; swords were

drawn,
And dire had been the conflict, but that some 686
Among the aged chiefs, by calm advice,
Appeased the strife: but where is Ajax gone?
That I may tell him: from our masters naught
Should be concealed.

CHO. He is not now within,
But just steps forth, as if on some new act 685
Intent, well suited to his better mind.
Mrs. Alast too late did Tayyer sand we have

MES. Alas! too late did Teucer send me here,
Or I am come too slowly.
Cho.
Why regret

His absence thus !

'Twas Teucer's strict command MES. He should be kept within the tent, nor stir Till he arrived.

CHO. But, to his sense restor'd. He went to deprecate the wrath divine, And expiate his offence.

Thy words are vain. MES. If Calchas prophesy aright. Сно. What then 694 Did Calchas say? Dost thou know aught of this? Mrs. Thus far I know, for I was witness of it: Calchas, retiring from the assembled chiefs. Apart from the Atridæ, gently press'd The hand of Teucer, and in tenderest friendship 700 Besought him, that by every human art And means to be devised he would prevent Ajax's wandering forth this fatal day. If he did ever wish to see him more: This day alone, he said, Minerva's wrath 705 Would last against him. Oft the mighty fall In deep affliction, smit by angry Heaven, When, mortal born, to human laws they yield not, As mortals ought, submissively. Thus spake The prophet, and long since was Ajax deem'd To have a mind disturb'd. When first he left His native soil,-" Be conqueror, O my child!" His father said; "but conquer under God." Impious and proud his answer was: "The worst Of men," he cried, "assisted by the gods, May conquer: I shall do the work without them!" Such were his boastings: and when Pallas once, With kind assistance, urged him to the fight, Dreadful and horrible was his reply: "Go, queen, to other Grecians lend thy aid: 'Tis needless here; for know, where Ajax is, The foe will never come." By words like these, And pride ill suited to a mortal's power, Did he offend the vengeful deity: But if he lives, we may preserve him still,

741

The gods assisting; so the prophet spake;
And Teucer bade me say you all should try
To keep him here: but if that cannot be,
And Calchas judge aright, he is no more.

Cho. [to Tecmessa within.] What, ho! Tecmessa,

Cho. [to Tecmessa within.] What, ho! Tecmessa, most unhappy woman!

Come forth, and hear the tidings that he brings:
They wound us deep, and all our joys are gone.

TECMESSA, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

Tro. Scarce do I breathe from still repeated woes, And now again thou call'st me: wherefore! speak! Cho. This messenger hath brought us dreadful news

Concerning Ajax: hear him.

TEC. Am I undone! O! what is it? 735

Mrs. I know not what thou art; But if thy Ajax be gone forth, my fears Are great for him.

Trc. Alas! he is; but why!

How thou afflict'st me!

Mes. Teuce

MES. Teucer hath forbid His wandering thus alone.

TEC.
And where is Teucer?

But why forbade him?

Mgs. He will soon be here: He fears this fatal day.

Undone Tecmessa!

Whence are his fears? Who told him 'twould be fatal?

Mgs. The historian Calchas did foretel this day
To life or death would fix the fate of Ajax. 745
Tgc. [to the Chorus.] Assist me, friends, in this

distressful hour:

To Teucer hasten, and bring him to my aid.

Some to you western mountain bend your way,

And some to the east; find out which path he went.

Unhappy wanderer! O! he has declared me,

Som.—D

His former love forgotten all, and gone.
What must we do, my child? I must not sit
Inactive here: no, wheresoe'er I can,
I'll go to search him: let us haste, my friends.
Quick, fly this instant, if we mean to save
The wretched Ajax rushing on destruction.
Cho. Behold us ready, not in word alone,
But bent with speed to follow thee. Away.

[Execut.

ACT IV.

AJAX.

There stands my sword, and fix'd as it may best Perform its office; 'twas the gift of Hector, My worst of foes, whom I detested ever. The steel-devouring stone hath sharpen'd well . Its keenest edge: buried in Trojan earth It lies, and now in kindness seems prepared To end my wretched life: thus far is well. 765 And now, O Jove! (for first to thee 'tis fit We pay due honours) I address my prayer: I ask not much: I ask thee but to send Some passing stranger here to bear the news Of my unhappy fate to Teucer's ear, 770 That he may first behold and take me hence: Lest, by my foes discover'd, I be cast A prey to dogs and birds: forbid it, Jove! Thee too, great leader of departed souls, Terrestrial Hermes, thee I call. O! hear me: 775 With easy steps, and swift, conduct me safe To my abode, soon as this fatal sword Shall reach my breast; and you, ye virgin Powers, From whom whate'er befalls of human ill Cannot be hid; ye goddesses revered, Swift to pursue the guilty; -0! behold The wretched Ajax by the Atridæ fall! O! seize the murderous! By my own sad hand As I shall perish, let my foes be slain

By those whom most they love! Quick, fly, begone. Ye vengeful Furies; gorge yourselves in blood, 786 Nor spare a man of all the Grecian host. And thou, O Sun! who drivest the flaming car Along the vaulted sky; when thou shalt see My native soil, O! stop thy golden reins; 790 Tell the sad story to my hapless sire, And my afflicted mother: when she hears The mournful tale, her grief will fill the land With dreadful lamentations: but 'tis vain To weep my fate; the business must be done. O Death! look on me, Death! I come to thee: Soon shall we meet: but thee, O glorious Day, And you bright charioteer, the Sun, no more Shall I behold: ev'n now thou hear'st my last, My dying words. O Light! O sacred soil 800 Of Salamis, my country, and her gods! O noble Athens! O my loved companions! Ye rivers, fountains, and fair fields of Troy! And you, my honour'd parents! O, farewell! "Tis the last word Ajax shall speak on earth: 805 The rest be utter'd to the shades below. [Ajax falls on his sword, and dies.

CHORUS.

SEMICHO. I. Labour on labour! toil on toil! O, whither

Have we not wander'd? yet no place informs us Where Ajax is: but soft, I hear a voice.

Semicho. 11. Twas ours, your friends.

Semicho. i. What news!

Semicho. II. We've search'd along 810

The western shore.

Semicho. 1. And is he found?

Semicho. II. Alas!

We met with naught but toil; no sight of him.

Semicho. I. We from the east return with like suc-

For none have seen or heard of him that way.

Semicho. II. Who will inform us I who will say \$15 Where cruel Ajax bent his way ? Will not the watchful hind, who, void of sleep. Hangs laborious o'er the deep ? From high Olympus will no pitying god, Will no kind naiad of the flood, If chance they see the cruel Ajax stray, Tell us where he bent his way? For O! 'tis dreadful, wearied thus, to rove, While all our pains successless prove To reach the destined goal, or find the man we love. TEC. [from within.] Alas! alas! Semicho. 1. Hark! from the neighbouring grove I heard a voice. Semicho. II. It is the wretched captive, The wife of Ajax; the poor, sad Tecmessa. TECMESSA, CHORUS. TEC. O! I am lost, my friends! undone, destroy'd. Сно. Ha! what hath happen'd! Aiax lies before me. 830 TEC. Slain by the sword which he has buried here. Сно. Fatal, sure, was our return. Thy untimely death to mourn, Me, and all thy faithful train, Cruel Ajax, hast thou slain; 835 Sad event, alas! to me; Sadder, woman! still to thee. TEC. O! I have reason now to weep, indeed. Cho. What hand perform'd the horrid deed? TEC. His own, Doubtless it was; the sword he fell upon, 840 Here fix'd in earth, declares it must be so. CHO. [approaching towards the body.] Alone, without one pitying friend, Camest thou to this dreadful end: Was I not myself to blame, 845 Who, neglectful, never came! Bring him, Tecmessa, to my eyes; Tell me where thy Aiax lies.

TEC. He is not to be seen: this folded garment Shall hide the horrid sight :—a sight no friend 849 Would wish to see; while from his nostrils stream The black blood, more still issuing from the wound, Made by his own destructive hand. O me! What must I do! what friend will raise him up! O! where is Teucer? He should have been here To pay his last sad duty to a brother. 855 O wretched Ajax! but to think, alas! What once thou hast been, and what now thou art,. Thy very foes must sure lament thy fate. Cно. Ajax, long since, in thy obdurate mind, Thy sad purpose was design'd: 860 Long since wert thou resolved to seek repose From thy never-ceasing woes. This from the daily sigh, the nightly tear, This from thy sorows did I fear: This from thy hate, which naught could e'er assuage; And 'gainst the Atridæ all thy rage: 866 For never did thy soul contentment know, But still with fiercest indignation glow, Since great Achilles' arms were given to thy foe. Trc. O me! Cнo. Alas! I know the wound must pierce 870 Thy inmost soul. Unhappy, lost Tecmessa! TEC. Cнo. O! I believe thou art indeed unhappy, Bereaved of such a friend. Thou but believ'st it: TEC. I am too certain, for I feel it here. CHO. I know thou dost. What servitude, my child, 875 TEC. Must we endure! Who will protect us now! Doubtless thy fear of future pain

From the Atridæ all are vain;
For never can they mean such ills to thee.
Unfeeling they of human wo,
Nor love nor piety could know.

May Heaven avert the sad calamity;

TEC. The gods ordain'd it, and it must be so. Cно. But he hath suffer'd more than he deserved. TEC. Jove's dreadful daughter, Pallas, so decreed His fate, to gratify her loved Ulysses. Ulysses, ever pleased to see His madness, now will smile at thee: Will laugh at Ajax' woes, nor pity thine: By him the cursed Atridæ led, 890 Perhaps will triumph o'er the dead. And in the cruel mirth with pleasure join. TEC. Let them rejoice, let them insult him now With savage joy; but when the dreadful day Of battle comes, whom living they despised, 895 When dead they shall lament: fools never know The treasure's value till the treasure's lost. But far more bitter was his death to me. Than sweet to them: to Ajax 'twas most welcome; Death was his only wish, and he obtain'd it: Then wherefore should they triumph? By the hand Of Heaven, and not by theirs, my Ajax fell. Then let Ulysses smile: he is not theirs. He lives not for the Grecians: he is gone. And has bequeathed his sorrows all to me. 905

TEUCER, TECMESSA, CHORUS.

Tru. Alas! Alas!

Hark! 'tis the voice of Teucer.

In mournful sighs lamenting our sad fate.

TEU. O Ajax! is it so! My dearest brother. Dear as these eyes to me, hath fame said true. And art thou gone?

O Teucer! he is dead. Сно.

TEU. Unhappy fate!

CHO. 'Tis so, indeed.

TEU. Alas!

Wretch that I am!

O! thou hast cause to weep

TEU. Dreadful calamity!

Сно. It is, indeed.

Too much to bear

TEU. O wretched, wretched Teucer!
Where is the child! Is he at Troy!
CHO. Alone, 915

And in the tent.

Will ve not bring him to me, TEU. Lest he should fall a victim to the foe; Ev'n as the hunters seize the lion's whelp Left to its helpless dam! Quick! fly! assist me: For all are glad to triumph o'er the dead. Сно. To thee, O Teucer! he bequeathed the care Of his loved child, and thou obey'st him well. Tru. O Aiax! never did these eves behold A sight so dreadful. Came I then for this With luckless speed? O melancholy ionrney! 925 To seek thee long in vain, and thus at last To find thee dead before me! O my brother! Quick through the Grecian host, as if some god Had brought the tidings, spread the dire report Of thy untimely fate: far from thee then 930 I heard and wept; but now, alas! I see, And am undone. My best, my dearest Ajax! Unveil the body; let me view it well, And count my miseries: horrid spectacle! O rash, adventurous deed! What weight of wo Thy death has laid on me! Alas! to whom, Or whither shall I go? O! wherefore, Teucer, Wert thou not here to stop a brother's hand? What will our poor unhappy father say, The wretched Telamon? Will he receive me 940 With looks of love and pleasure, when I come Without his Ajax! O! he never will.

His anger vent? Will he not speak of me 945
As of a faithless, base, unworthy son,
The spurious offspring of a captive mother,
Who hath betray'd and slain his best-loved Ajax,
To gain his fair possessions after death?
Thus will his wrath, sharpen'd by peevish age, 950

Ev'n in the best of times he was not wont To smile or joy in aught: what then will now

Upbraid me. guiltless: and to slavery doom'd. A wretched exile from his native land. Shall Teucer wander forth: such dreadful ills Must I expect at home. At Troy, my foes Are numerous; and my friends, alas! how few! Thou art the cause of all; for, O my Ajax! What shall I do! How can I save thee now From this sad fate? O! who could have foreseen That Hector, long since dead, at last should prove The murderer of Ajax? By the gods 960 I do beseech you, mark the fate of both The belt which Ajax did to Hector give, Dragg'd the brave Trojan o'er the bloody field. Till he expired; and now, behold! the sword Which Hector gave to Ajax is the cause Of Ajax' death: Erynnis' self did forge The fatal steel, and Pluto made the belt, Dreadful artificer! But this, and all That happens to us is the work of Heaven: If there be those who doubt it, let them hold Their differing judgments; I shall keep my own. Cно. Teucer, no more; but rather now prepare

Cho. Teucer, no more; but rather now prepare
To bury Ajax, and defend thyself
Against thy foe, whom yonder I behold
This way advancing, with malignant smile,
And looks of ill intent.

975

TEU. Who can it be !

From the army, think'st thou!

Сно. 'Tis the man whose cause We came to fight, ev'n Menelaus.

TEU. 'Tis so:

As he approaches nigh, I know him well.

MENELAUS, TEUCER, CHORUS.

MEN. Stop there; to thee I speak: let go the body; I will not have it touch'd.

TEU. Why touch it not? 98:
MEN. Because it is my will, and his who leads
The Grecian host.

TEU. But wherefore is it so?

MEN. Greece fondly hoped that she had brought a friend

And firm ally, but by experience found
That Troy herself was not so much our foe
As Ajax was, who nightly wander'd forth
With deadliest rage to murder all our host;
And, but some god did frustrate his intent,
The fate himself hath met had been our own:
Then had he triumphed; but the gods ordain'd
It should not be, and 'gainst the flocks and herds
Turn'd all his fury: wherefore, know, there lives
not

A man of courage or of power sufficient To bury Ajax: on the yellow shore 995 He shall be cast, to be the food of birds That wander there. Thou mayst resent it too. But 'twill be vain; at least we will command When dead, whom living we could ne'er subdue, Nor ask thy leave: he never would submit, But now he must: yield, therefore, or we force thee. "Tis the plebeian's duty to obey The voice of those who bear authority. And he who doth not is the worst of men; For never can the state itself support 1005 By wholesome laws, where there is no submission. An army's best defence is modest fear And reverence of its leaders: without these It cannot conquer; it becomes a man, How great soe'er his strength, still to remember, A little, very little, may destroy him. 1011 He, who is guarded by humility And conscious shame, alone in safety lies ; But where licentious freedom and reproach Injurious reign, each as his will directs 1015 Still acting:—know, that city soon must fall From all its bliss, and sink in deepest wo. Remember, then, respect is due to me. Let us not think, when pleasure is enjoy'd, 1030 We must not suffer too and taste of pain;

For these to mortals still alternate rise.
There lived not one so proud and arrogant
As Ajax was: I will be haughty now;
It is my turn: take heed then, touch him not,
Lest, while thou strivest to bury him, thyself
Shouldst drop into the tomb.

CHO.

O Menelaus!

Do not, with maxims grave, and wisdom's rules,

Mix foul reproach and slander on the dead.

Tru. It should not move our wonder, O my friend! To see the vulgar err, of meaner souls, 1030 And birth obscure, when men so nobly born Will talk thus basely. Tell me, Menelaus! (For 'twas thy first assertion) didst thou bring Our Ajax here to help the Grecian host, Or came he hither by himself alone 1035 Conducted! Whence is thy command o'er him. Or these his followers! Who gave thee power! Who gave thee right? Thou mayst be Sparta's king, But art not ours: Ajax was bound by law No more to thee than thou wert bound to Aiax: Thyself no general, but to others here Subjected, therefore lord it where thou mayst: Command thy slaves; go threaten and chastise them:

But I will bury Ajax, spite of thee
And of thy brother, for I heed thee not.
He sail'd not here to quarrel for the wife
Of Menelaus like a hireling slave,
But to fulfil the strictly-binding oath
Which he had sworn; he did not come for thee,
For he despised so poor a cause; he came

1048 Tyndarus, the father of Helen, obliged all his daughter's lovers to take an oath, that on which of them soever the lot should fall to marry her, the rest should unite in his defence, and, in case of any attempt to carry her off, should join their forces to recover her. Teucer, therefore, tells Menelaus that it was not any personal regard to num which induced Ajax to join the army, but his resolution to fulfil this solemn engagement.

With all his heralds, and a numerous train, And brought his captains too; remember, therefore, Thy clamours ne'er shall turn me from my purpose

While thou art what thou art.

MEN. A tongue like thine But ill becomes thy state: 'tis most unseemly. 1055
TEU. A keen reproach, with justice on its side,
Is always grating.

MEN. This proud archer here

Talks loudly.

TEU. 'Tis no mean, illiberal art.

Men. If thou couldst bear a shield, how insolent And haughty wouldst thou be, when naked thus

Thou boast'st thy valour!
Tru. Naked as I am, 1061
I should not fly from thee with all thy arms.

MEN. Thy tongue but speaks thy pride.

TEU. I should be proud

When I am just.

MEN. Doth justice bid me love

Him who destroy'd me?

TEU. And art thou then destroy'd?
That's strange indeed; living and dead at once. 1066
MEN. For him I had been so; the gods preserved

me.
Tru. Do not dishonour then the powers divine

That saved thee.

MEN. Do I violate their laws!
TEU. If thou forbid'st the burial of the dead,
Thou dost offend the gods.

Man. He was my foe, 1071

And therefore I forbid it.

Tru. Art thou sure

That Ajax ever was thy foe !

MEN. I am:

Our hate was mutual, and thou know'st the cause.

1057 Homer, whom Sophocles never loses sight of, describes Teucer as a skilful archer.

Tsu. Because thou wert corrupted, thy false voice Condemn'd him.

MEN. 'Twas the judges' fault, not mine. 1076
TEU. Thus mayst thou screen a thousand injuries.
MEN. Some one may suffer for this insolence.

Tru. Not more, perhaps, than others.

MEN.
Remember, buried he shall never be.
This alone
1060

TEU. Do thou remember, too, I say he shall.

MEN. So have I seen a bold imperious man,
With forward tongue, before the storm began,
Urging the tardy mariner to sail;
But when the tempest rose, no more was heard
The coward's voice, but, wrapp'd beneath his cloak,
Silent he laid, and suffer'd every foot
To trample on him: thus it is with thee,
And thy foul tongue; forth from a little cloud,
Soon as the storm shall burst, it will o'erwhelm thee,
And stop thy clamours.

TEU. I too have beheld

A man with folly swoln, reproach his friends
Oppress'd with sore calamity, when straight
One came like me, with indignation fired;
Saw, and address'd him thus:—" Cease, shameless
wretch!

Nor thus oppress the dead; for if thou dost, Remember, thou shalt suffer for thy crime." Thus spake he to the weak, insulting fool: Methinks I see him here; it must be he, Ev?n Menelaus; have I guessed aright?

Ev'n Menelaus: have I guessed aright?

MEN. 'Tis well; I'll leave thee; 'tis a folly thus

To talk with those whom we have power to punish.

[Exit.

TEUCER, CHORUS.

Tru. Away! this babbler is not to be borne.

1075 It is said that in the famous contest between Ajax and Ulysees for the arms of Achilles, the former lost them by the casting vote of Menelaus.

Cho. The contest will grow warm. O Teucer!

Prepare some hollow foss for the remains Of Ajax: raise him there a monument, By after ages ne'er to be forgotten. 1105

Tru. And lo! in happy hour this way advancing The wife and son of our unhappy friend,
To pay due honours, and adorn his tomb.

TECMESSA, EURYSACES, TEUCER, CHORUS.

TEU. Come hither, boy! bend down, and touch thy father:

There sit; and, holding in thy hands this hair,
And hers, and thine, the suppliant's humble treasure,
Offer thy pious prayers for thy dead father.
If from yon hostile camp the foe should come 1115
To drive thee hence, far from his native land,
Whoe'er he be, unburied may he lie,
From his whole race uprooted, torn away,
Evn as this hair which here I cut before thee.
O! guard it well, my child! and you, my friends!
Behave like men, assist, protect him now, 1121
Till I return; and, spite of all our foes,
Perform the rites, and raise a tomb to Ajax.

TECMESSA, MURYSACES, QMORUS.

CHORUS. - STROPHE 1.

When will the happy hour appear,
That comes to calm our every fear,
1125
From endless toil to bring us sweet repose,
To bid our weary wanderings cease,

To fold us in the arms of peace,
And put the wish'd-for period to our woes!
For since the day when first to Troy we came, 1130
Naught have we known but grief, reproach, and shame.

ANTISTROPHE I.

O! that the man, who erst, inspired
With horrid rage, our Grecians fired

To slaughterous deeds, and taught them first to fight,

E'er he had learn'd the dreadful trade,
Himself had mingled with the dead,
Or scatter'd wide in air, or sunk in endless night!
For O! from war unnumber'd evils flow,
The inexhausted source of every human wo.

1140

1150

By war disturb'd, the genial board No longer will its sweets afford; Their fragrant odours round my head,

The verdant wreaths no longer spread; Nor music's charms my soul delight,

Nor love with rapture crowns the night, 1145
No love, alas! for me, but grief and care;
For when I think of Troy, I still despair,
And wet with many a tear my wild dishevell'd hair.

Nor nightly fear, nor hostile dart,
While Ajax lived, appall'd my heart;
But all our pleasures now are o'er;
The valiant Ajax is no more.
O! could I climb the woody steep

That hangs incumbent o'er the deep,
From Sunium's cliff by waves for ever beat! 1155
Thence should my eye the lovely prospect greet,
And smile on sacred Athens rising at my feet.

ACT V.

TEUCER, AGAMEMNON, CHORUS.

Tru. This way I bent my hasty steps, to meet The Grecian chief, who hither comes prepared To vent his keen reproaches.

Aga. I am told, 1160
That thou, ev'n thou, the son of a vile slave,
Hast dared to utter foulest calumny
Against thy prince, and pass'd unpunish'd for it.

Mean as thy birth is, what had been thy pride And high demeanour, had thy mother sprung 1160 From noble blood? Barbarian as thou art. How couldst thou praise a wretch, who, like thyself, Was nothing? We, it seems (for thou hast sworn it). Are not the masters or of Greece or thee: Ajax, alone, thou say'st was leader here. 1170 Shall we be thus insulted by our slaves? Who is this boaster? and what mighty deed Hath he perform'd which I could not have done? Is there no hero in the Grecian host But Ajax ? Vain, indeed, were our resolves In the warm contest for Achilles' arms, If Teucer yet shall question the decree Against the general voice; resisting still, And still reproachful, with delusive arts, Though conquer'd, yet opposing: wholesome laws Will naught avail, if those whom justice deems 1181 Superior to the vanquish'd must resign, And first in virtue be the last in fame. It must not be: not always the huge size Of weighty limbs ensures the victory: 1185 They who excel in wisdom are alone Invincible. Thou seest the brawny ox. How the small whip will drive him through the field : What if the medicine be applied to thee, For thy proud, boasting, and licentious tongue! 1190 "I will be thy portion soon, unless thou learn'st More wisdom. Henceforth, mindful what thou art, Bring with thee one of nobler blood to plead Thy cause; for know, the language which thou talk'st Is barbarous, and I understand thee not. Сно. I can but wish that wisdom may attend To guide you both TEU. Alas, how very soon Are all the merits of the dead forgotten!

O Ajax! is the memory of thee

Already lost! ev'n by the man for whom
Thy life so oft was ventur'd in the field!
But now 'tis past, and buried in oblivion.
Thou wordy slanderer! canst thou not remember,
When, baffled and unequal to the foe,
Close pent within the walls our forces lay;—
1205
Canst thou not call to mind, who came alone
To your deliverance, when devouring flames
Tower'd o'er our ships; when Hector leap'd the
foss,

And rush'd among us! Then who fought for Greece! Who drove him back, but Ajax? who, thou say'st, Could never fight; did he not fight for you? He met the noble Hector hand to hand; Unbidden dared the fortune of the field: He scorn'd the coward's art to fix his lot In the moist earth; forth from the crested helmet It sprang the first: such were the deeds of Ajax, 1216 And I was witness of them; I, the slave, For so thou call'st me, sprung from a barbarian. How dares a wretch like thee to talk of birth? Who was thy grandsire! Canst thou not remember That old barbarian, Phrygian Pelops! Tell me, 1221 Who was thy father ! Atreus, was he not ! That worst of men, who, at a brother's table, Served up his children; horrible repast! Thy mother, too, a Cretan, and a slave: 1225 A vile adulteress, whom thy father caught, And headlong cast into the sea. Shalt thou Talk then to me of birth! to me, the son Of valiant Telamon, renown'd in war, And wedded to a queen, the royal race 1230 Of great Laomedon, and fairest gift Of famed Alcides! Thus of noble blood From either parent sprung, shall I disgrace The man whom thou, inhuman! wouldst still keep Unburied here! Dost thou not blush to think on't? But, mark me well: if thou dost cast him forth, 1236 Not he alone inglorious on the plain

Shall lie; together we will perish all:
To die with glory in a brother's cause
Is better far than fighting for the wife
Of Agamemnon or of Menelaus:
For thy own sake, and not for mine, remember,
If thou provoke me, thou'lt be sorry for it,
And wish thou'dst rather feared than anger'd Teucer.

ULYSSES, AGAMEMNON, MENELAUS, TEUCER, CHORUS.

CHO. Ulysses, if thou mean'st not to inflame, 1245 But to compose this dreadful strife, thou comest In happiest hour.

ULVS. Far off I heard the voice Of the Atridæ o'er this wretched corse. Whence rose the clamour, friends !

Men. With bitterest words
This Teucer, here, Ulysses, has reviled me. 1250
ULYS. What words? for if he heard the same
from thee.

I blame him not.

AGA. He did provoke me to it.
ULYS. What injury hath he done thee?
AGA. He declares
The body shall have sepulture; himself
Perforce will bury Ajax, spite of me 1255
And of my power.

ULYS. Shall I be free, and speak
The truth to thee, without reproach or blame!
AGA. Thou mayst; for well thou know'st I hold

Ulysses,
Of all the Greeks, my best and dearest friend.
ULys. Then hear me: by the gods, I must entreat

thee,
Do not, remorseless and inhuman, cast
The body forth unburied, nor permit
Authority to trample thus on justice.
E'er since our contest for Achilles' arms,

Hath Ajax been my foe, and yet I scorn To use him basely: ev'n Ulysses owns, 1265

1260

ULYS.

Of all the Grecian chiefs who came to Troy Except Achilles, Ajax was the bravest. Do not deny him then the honours due To worth so great; for know, it were a crime, 1970 Not against him alone, but 'gainst the gods: A violation of the laws divine. To hurt the brave and virtuous after death. Ev'n though he liv'd thy foe, is infamous. Aga. Plead'st thou for Ajax! Yes: I was his foe 1975 ULVS. While justice would permit me; but he's dead: Therefore thou shouldst not triumph, nor rejoice With mirth unseemly o'er a vanquish'd man. Aga. 'Tis not so easy for a king to act By honour's strictest rules. Tis always so, Ulys. 1980 To hearken to the counsels of a friend. When he advises well. But know, the good And virtuous still submit to those who rule. ULYS. No more: when thou art vanquished by thy friends. Thou art thyself the conqueror. Still remember 1285 For whom thou plead'st, Ulysses. ULYS. For a foe. But for a brave one. Dost thou thus revere, Ev'n after death, thy enemy? ULYS. Virtue is dearer to me than revenge. Aga. Such men are most unstable in their wavs. ULYS. Our dearest friend may one day be our foe. Aga. Dost thou desire such friends? ULYS. I cannot love Or praise the unfeeling heart. Aga. This day shall Greece Mark us for cowards.

Greece will call us just.

AGA. Wouldst thou persuade me, then, to grant him burial? ULYS. I would, and for that purpose came I hither. Aga. How every man consults his own advantage, And acts but for himself! ULYS. And who is he Whom I should wish to serve before Ulvssen? Aga. 'Tis thy own work, remember, and not mine. ULYS. The deed will win thee praise, and every 1301 tongue Shall call thee good. Thou know'st I'd not refuse Ulysses more, much more than this; but Ajax, Or buried or unburied, is the same, And must be hateful still to Agamemnon: 1305 But do as it beseems thee best. Сно. Ulysses! The man who says thou art not wise and good, Is senseless and unjust. ULYS. I tell thee, Teucer, Henceforth I am as much the friend of Ajax As once I was his foe: ev'n now I mean 1310 To join with thee, a fellow-labourer In all the pious offices of love; Nor would omit, what ev'ry man should pay. The honours due to such exalted virtue. Tru. O best of men! thou hast my thanks and praise, And well deservest them, for thou hast transcended My utmost hopes. I little thought the worst Of all his foes among the Grecian host Would thus alone defend, alone protect The dead from insult, when these thund'ring leaders United came, to cast his body forth 1321 With infamy: but may the god who rules O'er high Olympus, and the vengeful Furies Daughters of Jove, the guilt-rewarding sisters, 1325 With all-deciding justice, soon repay

The haughty tyrants: for thy offer'd aid

My willing aid; but since it must not be, 1335
I shall submit: farewell. [Exit Ulysses.

AGAMEMNON, MENELAUS, TEUCER, EURYSACES, CHORUS.

Tzu. Thus far is right:
The time already past doth chide our sloth.
My friends, be vigilant: let some prepare
The hollow foss; some o'er the sacred flame
Place the rich tripod for the funeral bath:
1340
Forth from the camp a chosen band must bear
His glittering arms, and trophies of the war.
Do thou, my child, if thou hast strength, uplift
[to Eurysaces.]

Thy father's body: see, the veins, yet warm,
Spout forth with blood. Haste, help, assist me, all
Who bear the name of friends, and pay with me
Your last sad duties to the noble Ajax;
1347
For never was on earth a better man.

Cho. Whate'er of good or ill weak mortals know, Must from their best of guides, experience, flow. Seek then no farther: for to man is given 1351 The present state; the future left to Heaven.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ELECTEA, daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra.
ORESTES, brother of Electra.
PYLADES, friend of Orestes.
GOVERNOR of Orestes.
CLYTEMNESTEA, wife of Ægisthus.
CHEYSOTHEMIS, sister of Electra.
ÆGISTHUS, king of Argos and Mycense.
CHORUS, composed of the principal ladies of Mycens.

ELECTRA.

ELECTRA.

ARGUMENT.

AFTEE Agamemnon had been assassinated by his wife Clytemnestra and her paramour Ægisthus, Orestes, then an infant, was preserved from a participation in the same fate by his sister Electra, who privately conveyed him to the court of Strophius, king of Phocis, who treated him with the utmost kindness, and educated him with his son Pylades, with whom he contracted an indissoluble friendship. On attaining years of maturity, Orestes, together with his companion, visited the city of Mycene in disguise, and, by the assistance of his governor, defunded the adulterous pair into a fatal security, by a report which he propagated of his death. Having at length discovered himself to Electra, who willingly co-operated with him in the prosecution of his revenge, he slew his mother during the absence of the tyrant, who, on his return, received the just punishment of his atrocious guilt.

ACT I.

Scene,-Mycenæ, before the palace of Ægisthus.

ORESTES, PYLADES, GOVERNOR OF ORESTES.

Gov. O son of great Atrides, he who led Embattled Greece to Troy's devoted walls; At length behold what thy desiring eyes So long have sought; behold thy native soil, Thy much-loved Argos, and the hallow'd grove Of Io, frantic maid: on this side lies

6 Io, the daughter of Inachus, who was transformed into a heifer by Jupiter, to conceal her from the rage of Juno, who discovered and placed her under the guardianship of Argos.

The Lycian forum; on the left, the fane Of Juno far renown'd: behold! we come To rich Mycenæ, and the slaughterous house	
Long since I bore thee, at thy sister's hand	lO
Gladly received, and with paternal care	
To this bless'd day have foster'd up thy youth,	
Till riper years should give thee to return,	
	L 5
Now, my Orestes! and thou dear companion	
Of all our sufferings, much-loved Pylades!	
Let deepest counsel sway our just resolves;	
For, lo! resplendent Phœbus, with his light,	
	10
And gloomy Night hath lost her starry train:	
Come then, my friends, and ere the awaken'd city	
Pours forth her busy throngs, this instant here	
Let us consult: believe me, 'tis no time	
	35
And this the very crisis of our fate.	
Ores. What proofs thou givest me of the noble	st
nature •	
And true benevolence, thou good old man!	
Of servants sure the faithfulest and best	
That ever bore the name. The generous steed, 3	30
Though worn with years, thus keeps his wonte	be
courage,	
And warns his master of approaching danger:	
Like him, thou stirr'st me up to noble deeds,	
And follow'st me undaunted: but attend	
To what I have resolved: and, if I err,	35
Let thy superior judgment set me right.	•
When to the Delphic oracle I flew,	
Eager to know how on my father's foes	
I best might satiate my revenge, the god	
Enjoin'd me not by force, or open arms,	٠
To rush upon them; but with guileful arts,	

And silent, well-conducted fraud, betray them. Such was his will; thou, therefore, soon as time Shall lend the opportunity, unknown And unsuspected (as thy absence hence For so long space, and hoary age, shall make thee), Must steal upon them, learn their secret counsels, As soon thou mayst, and quick inform us of them; Say thou'rt of Phocis, from Phanoteus sent, By one who is their friend and firm ally: 50 Say, and confirm it with a solemn oath. Orestes is no more, by a rude shock Thrown from his chariot at the Pythian games: Be this thy tale. Meantime (for thus the god His will divine express'd) my father's tomb 55 With due libations and devoted hair Ourselves will crown; and thence returning, bring, From the dark covert where thou know'st 'twas hid. The brazen urn; there, we shall tell the tyrant, Thrice welcome news! Orestes' ashes lie. 60 What should deter me from the pious fraud, Since my feign'd death but gains me real fame, And I shall wake to better life! the deed Which brings success and honour must be good. Ofttimes the wisest and the best of men. From death like this, have rose with added greatness;

Ev'n so thy friend to his deluded foes
Shall soon return unlook'd-for, and before them
Shine like a star with more distinguish'd lustre.
O my loved country, and its guardian gods! 70
Receive Orestes, and with happy omen
Propitious smile; and thou, paternal seat!
For, lo! by Heaven's command I come to purge
thee
Of vile usurpers, and avenge thy wrong.

⁴⁹ Phanoteus was a small town of Phocis, a city of Greece, imous for the oracle of Delphos: according to Strabo, it was kinnerty-called Panope.

Born.—F

Drive me not from thee an abandon'd exile With infamy, but grant me to possess My father's throne, and fix his injured race. Thus far 'tis well: my faithful minister! Thou to thy office, we to ours with speed: So time and opportunity require, 80 On whom the fate of mortals must depend. Elec. [from within.] O misery! Methought a mournful voice Gov. Spake from within. Perhaps the poor Electra: Shall we not stay and hearken to it? No: Gov. First, be Apollo's great behests obey'd Before thy father's tomb: that pious deed Perform'd shall fire our souls with nobler warmth. And crown our bold attempt with fair success. [Exercit.

ELECTRA.

O sacred light! and, O, thou ambient air! Oft have ye heard Electra's loud laments, 90 Her sighs, and groans, and witness'd to her woes, Which ever, as each hateful morn appear'd, I pour'd before you; what at eve retired I felt of anguish, my sad couch alone Can tell, which, water'd nightly with my tears, Received me sorrowing: that best can tell What pangs I suffer'd for a hapless father, Whom not the god of war with ruthless hand Struck nobly fighting in a distant soil: But my fell mother, and the cursed Ægisthus, The partner of her bed, remorseless slew. Untimely didst thou fall, lamented shade! And none but poor Electra mourns thy fate; Nor shall she cease to mourn thee, while these eyes View the fair heavens, or behold the sun; 105 Never, O! never like the nightingale.

106 Philomela, the daughter of Pandion, and sister of Proces.

Whose plaintive song bewails her ravish'd brood;
Here will I still lament my father's wrongs,
And teach the echo to repeat my moan.
O ye infernal deities! and thou,
Terrestrial Hermes! and thou, Nemesis,
Replete with curses! and ye vengeful Furies!
Offspring of gods, the ministers of wrath
To vile adulterers, who with pity view
The slaughter'd innocent, behold this deed.
O! come, assist, revenge my father's murder;
Quickly, O! quickly bring me my Orestes;
For, lo! I sink beneath oppressive wo,
And can no longer bear the weight alone.

CHORUS, ELECTRA.

CHO. O wretched daughter of an impious mother! Wilt thou for ever mourn; for ever thus, With unavailing tears and endless sorrow. Lament the royal Agamemnon's fate, By a vile woman's wicked arts betray'd! Perish the hand (forgive the plous curse, 125 Ye heavenly powers!) that gave the deadly blow! ELEC. My noble friends, and partners in affliction. Who thus, to sooth my sorrows, kindly try Each art which love and friendship can inspire: Ye come to comfort me, I know ye do: 130 I know my tears are fruitless all, and vain; But, O! permit me to indulge my griefs. For I must weep. Thy tears can ne'er recall him From the dark mansions of the common grave, No, nor thy prayers; they can but make thee wretched.

the wife of Tereus. The poet, both in this and the following scene, takes the nightingale for Procne; as it was Procne, and not Philomela, who served up her son Itys to Tereus, in revenge for the injury done to her sister. Æschylus, Euripides, and Aristophanes also, suppose Procne to have been changed into a

nightingale.

And sink thee deeper in calamity; Why art thou then so fond of misery? Elec. Devoid of sense and feeling is the heart That can forget an injured parent's wrongs. I love the airy messenger of Jove; 140 The mournful bird that weeps her Itys' fate, And every night repeats the tender tale : Thee too I reverence as a goddess, thee, Unhappy Niobe! for still thou weep'st. And from the marble tears eternal flow. 145 CHO. But. O! reflect that not to thee alone Misfortune comes, that comes to all: behold Iphianassa and Chrysothemis, And him who hides his grief, illustrious youth, The loved Orestes; these have suffer'd too. 150 Elec. Orestes! yes, Mycenæ shall receive In happy hour her great avenger; Jove With smiles auspicious shall conduct him to me. For him alone I wait; for him, a wretch Despised, of children and of nuptial rites 155 Hopeless I wander; he remembers not What I have done for him, what suffer'd; still With airy promises he mocks my hopes, And yet he comes not to me. But he will. Сно. Despair not, daughter; Jove is yet in heaven, The god who sees, and knows, and governs all. Patient to him submit, nor let thy rage Too far transport thee, nor oblivion drown The just remembrance of thy matchless woes. Time is a kind, indulgent deity, 165 And he shall give thee succour, he shall send

140 Procne, called the messenger of Jove, from ushering in the spring. See the note on Philomela.

148 The sisters of Electra.

¹⁴⁴ Niobe, the daughter of Tantalus, and queen of Thebes; feigned by the poets to be turned into stone, after the death of her children.

180

The god of Acheron, from Chrysa's shores To bring Orestes, and avenge thy wrongs.

ELEC. O! but the while how much of life is gone!
And I, a hopeless wretched orphan still,
Without a friend to guard or to protect me;
Disgraced, dishonour'd, like a stranger clad
In base attire, and fed with homeliest fare!

CHO. Sad news indeed the hapless messenger
To Argos brought, that spoke the wish'd return 175
Of thy loved father to his native soil;
Fatal the night when Agamemnon fell
Or by a mortal or immortal hand;
The work of fraud and lust, a horrid deed!
Whose reformed it

Whoe'er perform'd it.

O detested feast!
O day the bitterest sure that ever rose!
With him I perished then; but may the gods
Repay the murderers; never may they hear
The voice of joy, or taste of comfort more.

Сио. Cease thy complaints: already hast thou suffer'd 185 For thy loud discontents and threaten'd vengeance.

Tis folly to contend with power superior.

Elec. Folly, indeed, and madness! but my griefs Will force their way; and while Electra breathes She must lament; for who will bring me comfort, 190 Or sooth my sorrows! Let me, let me go, And weep for ever.

CHO. 'Tis my love entreats;
Trust me, I feel a mother's fondness for thee,
And fain would save thee from redoubled woes.

Fire And wouldst thou have me then neglect the

Elec. And wouldst thou have me then neglect the dead?

167 Chrysa was a town of Phoeis, of which Strophius, the father of Pylades, was king. This was the place where Orestes was privately educated, and accounts for the celebrated friendship of the two princes.

193 The Chorus is composed of the principal matrons of rank

and quality in Mycense.

Forget my father? Can there be such guilt?
When I do so, may infamy pursue me;
And if I wed, may all the joys of love
Be far removed! If vengeance doth not fall
On crimes like these, for ever farewell, justice! 200
Shame, honour, truth, and piety, farewell!

Сно. Pardon me, daughter! if my warmth offend, Glad I submit; we'll follow and obey thee.

ELEC. I am myself to blame, and blush to think How much unfit I seem to bear the weight Imposed upon me; but indeed 'tis great. Forgive me, friends! a woman born as I am,— Must she not grieve to see each added minute Fraught with new miseries! thus to be a slave Ev'n in my father's house, and from those hands 210 . Which shed his blood to ask the means of life? Think what my soul must suffer to behold The cursed Ægisthus seated on the throne Of Agamemnon, in the very robes Which once were his! to see the tyrant pour Libations forth ev'n on the fatal spot Where the sad deed was done! but, worst of all. To see the murderer usurp his bed, Embrace my mother (by that honour'd name If I may call a guilty wretch like her), Who, pleased, returns his love, and of her crimes Unconscious, smiles, nor fears the avenging Furies; But ever, as the bloody day returns Which gave the royal victim to her wiles, 225 Annual the dance and choral song proclaim A solemn feast; nor impious sacrifice Forgets she then to her protecting gods. Shock'd at the cruel banquet, I retire, And in some corner hide my griefs, denied Ev'n the sad comfort to indulge my sorrows; For Clytemnestra, in opprobrious terms, Reviles me oft:-"To thee alone," she cries. "Is Agamemnon lost, detested maid? Think'st thou Electra only weeps his fate ! Perdition on thee! May the infernal gods 235

Refuse thee succour, and protract thy pains!" Thus rails she bitter; and if by chance she hear Orestes is approaching, stung with rage, Wild she exclaims,—"Thou art the accursed cause: This is thy deed, who stole Orestes from me, And hid him from my rage; but be assured, Ere long my vengeance shall o'ertake thee for it!" These threats her noble lord still urges on: That vile adulterer, that abandon'd coward. Whose fearful soul call'd in a woman's aid 245 To execute his bloody purposes. Meantime Electra sighs for her Orestes, Her wish'd avenger; his unkind delay Destroys my hopes. Alas! my gentle friends, Who can bear this, and keep an equal mind? To suffer ills like mine, and not to err From wild distraction, would be strange indeed! Сно. But say, Electra, is the tyrant near, Or may we speak our thoughts unblamed? ELEC. Thou mayst; I had not else beyond the palace dared 255 To wander hither. I would fain have asked thee-Сно. Elec. Ask what thou wilt, Ægisthus is far off.

Сно. I would fain have asked thee— Elec. Ask what thou wilt, Ægisthus is far off. Сно. Touching thy brother, then; inform me quick If aught thou know'st that merits firm belief. Elec. He promises, but comes not. Сно. Things of moment

Require deliberation and delay.

Elec. O! But did I delay to save Orestes?

Cho. He boasts a noble nature, and will ne'er

Forget his friends: be confident.

Elec.

Were I not so, I had not lived till now.

Cho. But soft; behold the fair Chrysothemis

Advance this way, and in her hand she bears

Sepulchral offerings to the shades below.

I am:

268 The sepulchral offerings here mentioned were generally honey, wine, milk, water, and barley-flour; these were continued

CHRYSOTHEMIS, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CHRY. Still, my Electra, pouring forth thy griefs?
Art thou not yet by sad experience taught
How little they avail? I too must feel,
And could resent, as, were thy sister's power
But equal to her will, her foes should know.
Meantime with lower'd sail to bear the storm
Befit us best, nor, helpless as we are,
With idle hopes to meditate revenge.
Yield then with me; and though impartial justice
Plead on thy side, remember if we prize
Or life or liberty we must obey.

Elec. It ill bécomes great Agamemnon's daughter Thus to forget her noble father's worth. And take a base unworthy mother's part; For well I see from whom thy counsels flow: Naught from thyself thou say'st, but all from her; Either thy reason's lost, or if thou hast it, 285 Thou hast forgot thy friends, who should be dear And precious to thee: of thy boasted hate Against our foes, and what thou vaunt'st to do. If thou hadst power, I reck not: while with me Thou wilt not join in great revenge, but still Dissuadest me from it. Is't not cowardly To leave me thus? Tell me, I beg thee tell me, What mighty gain awaits my tame submission. Should I suppress my griefs: I can but live; That I do now, a wretched life indeed! 295 But 'tis enough for me, and I am happy, While I can torture them, and to the dead Pay grateful honours, if to them such care Aught grateful can bestow. Thy hate, I fear me, Is but in word; thou dost befriend the murderers. For me, not all the wealth they could bestow, 301 Not all the gifts which they have poured on thee.

to render the ghost propitious, and were poured on the ground or grave-stone, and, together with a certain form of words, offered to the deceased. Should bind me to them: take thy costly banquets, And let thy days with ease and pleasure flow:
Give me but food, and I am satisfied.

305
I wish not for thy honours; nor wouldst thou,
If thou wert wise, receive them at their hands.
Thou mightst be daughter to the best of fathers,
And art thy mother's only; take that name;
And henceforth all shall mark thee as a wretch, 310
Who hath betray'd her father and her friends.

CHO. I do entreat you, let not anger come
Between you thus; you both have reasoned well,
And much of mutual benefit may flow,
If each to other lend a patient ear.

31

CHRY. Custom, my noble friends! hath made re-

proach niliar with me

Familiar with me; and so well I know
Her haughty mind, I had been silent still,
But that I saw the danger imminent,
And came to warn her of the fatal stroke,
Which soon must end her and her griefs together.

Elec. Tell me this mighty danger; if aught more It threaten than Electra long hath borne,

I yield me to thy counsels.

Chav. Hear me then:
Know thou art doomed, unless thou dost refrain 325
Thy clamorous griefs, far from the light of day,
And this thy native soil, within a cell
Dismal and dark to spend the poor remains
Of thy sad life, and there lament thy fate.

ELEC. Is it decreed? Must it in truth be so! 330 Chev. Soon as Ægisthus shall return, it must. ELEC. Quick let him come: I long to see him here.

CHRY. Alas! what dreadful imprecations these! Elec. Would he were present, if for this he comes!

CHRY. What! to destroy thee! is thy mind disturbed!

335

ELEC. That I might fly for ever from thy sight.

CHRY. Wilt thou not think how to preserve thy life! Elec. Mine is a blessed life indeed to think of! CHRY. It might be blessed if thou wouldst have it 80. Elec. Teach me not basely to betray my friends. Chry, I do not; all I ask thee is to yield To powers superior. ELEC. Fawn on them thyself: Thou dost not know Electra. Sure. it better Deserves the name of wisdom to avoid Than hasten thy destruction. ELEO. No: to die 345 Were pleasure, could I but avenge my father. CHRY. Our father, doubt it not, will pardon thee. ELEC. 'Tis mean to think so. CHRY. Wilt thou not consent? Elec. Never, O! never, be my soul so weak. CHRY. Then to my errand; fare thee well. ELEC. To whom, **350** Chrysothemis: and whither dost thou bear Those sacred offerings! CHRY. To our father's tomb, From Clytemnestra. To the man she hated? The man, my sister-Whom she kill'd, I know, CHRY. Thou wouldst say. Why, what should move her to it? 256 Chry. If I mistake not, horrors late impressid. From a sad vision. ELEC. O my country's gods! Succour me now! CHRY. What hopes dost thou conceive From this ? The dream: and I will tell thee all. CHRY. I know but little of it. Eleo, Tell me that: 364

370

390

Ofttimes to words, how few soe'er they be, Is given the power to save or to destroy. Chry. Once more to light return'd (so fame reports),

Before her our loved father did appear. The royal sceptre wielded in his hand, 305 Which now Ægisthus bears; whence seem'd to spring

A green and leafy branch, whose wide extent O'er all Mycenæ spread its verdant shade: This did I learn, and this alone, from one Who listen'd long attentive, while she told Her vision to the Sun; hence all her fears, And hence my destined journey.

By the gods Let me conjure thee, hear me; if thou dost not, Too late shalt thou repent, when for thy guilt 375 Evil o'ertake thee. O Chrysothemis! Never, I beg thee, to our father's tomb Bear thou those offerings: 'twere a horrid deed,. From such a woman: give them to the winds. Let them be hid, deep buried in the sands, 380 **And not** the smallest grain escape, to reach That hallow'd place; let them remain for her, Safe in the earth till she shall meet them there. None but this shameless, this abandon'd woman. Would e'er with impious offerings thus adorn The tomb of him she murder'd: by the dead 385 Think'st thou such gifts can be with joy received?

371 It was customary among the ancients, when they had been terrified by bad dreams, to open their windows in the morning, and relate their dreams to the Sun, who, they imagined, as he had power to dispel the darkness, could also turn aside all the evils which the preceding night had threatened them with.

Gifts from that hand, which from his mangled corse Sever'd his lifeless limbs, and on the head Of the poor victim wiped her bloody sword. Madness, to think that offerings and ablutions

Could purge such crimes, or wash her stains away! Never. O! never: but of this no more. Instant, my sister! thy devoted hair, With these dishevell'd locks, and this my zone, Plain as it is, and unadorn'd, shalt thou Bear to our father: wretched offerings these, But, O! 'tis all Electra now can give. Bear them, and suppliant on thy knees implore him To smile propitious, and assist his children. Pray for Orestes, too, that soon with power 400 He may return, and trample on our foes; So shall a fairer tribute one day grace His honour'd tomb than now we can bestow. Trust me, my sister! we are still his care.— I know we are; from him the vision came, 405 The horrid dream, that shook her guilty soul. Now, then, I beg thee, be a friend to me; Be to thyself a friend, a friend to him, Of all mankind the dearest, our dead father. Сно. Well doth the pious virgin speak, and thou Must yield to her requests. CHRY. And so I will. Where reason dictates, strife should never come: But, quick, despatch, fulfil her just commands: Yet, O my friend! remember, our attempt Is full of danger, and let naught escape 415 That may be tray me to my cruel mother: For, if it reach her ear, this daring act, I fear me much, shall one day cost us dear.

CHORUS.

Exit Chrysothemis.

STROPHE.

Or my prophetic mind is now no more
Attentive as of old to wisdom's lore,

Or Justice comes, with speedy vengeance fraught:
Behold! the goddess arm'd with power appears;
It must be so by Clytemnestra's fears,
And the dire dream that on her fancy wrought.

Thy father, not unmindful of his fate,
Shall hither come, his wrongs to vindicate;
And, in his gore imbrued,
The fatal axe with him shall rise,

Shall ask another sacrifice,

And drink with him the cruel tyrant's blood. 430

Lo! with unnumber'd hands, and countless feet, The Fury comes, her destined prey to meet:

Deep in the covert hid, she glides unseen,

Hangs o'er the trembling murderer's head, Or steals to the adulterous bed, 435

An awful witness of the guilty scene.

Doubtless, the dream, with all its terrors, meant, For crimes like these, some dreadful punishment.

If mortals aught from mighty visions know;
If truth from great Apollo's shrine

440

Appear in oracles divine,
Presaging bliss to come, or threatening future wo.

EPODE.

O Pelops! to thy country and to thee The fatal course brought wo and misery;

For since the time when from his chariot thrown, 445 For thee the guilty wreath to gain,

The hapless Myrtilus was slain,

Naught has thy wretched race but grief and sorrow known.

446 Œnomaus had a beautiful daughter, named Hippodamia, whom he refused to give in marriage, because the oracle declared that a son-in-law would be fatal to him; he promised, however, to bestow his daughter on any man who should conquer him in the chariot-race, on condition that all who were vanquished by him should be put to death: many bold adventurers accepted the terms, and perished in the attempt: the horses of Œnomaus were swift as the wind, and consequently invincible. These examples, however, did not deter Pelops, who entered the lists against Œnomaus, and bribed his charioteer, Myrtilus, with a promise of half his kingdem if he snooseded. Myrtilus listened to his offers, and purposely forgot to put the pina into the wheel

SOPH.-G

ACT II.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CLy. Ægisthus absent, who alone could curb Thy haughty spirit, and licentious tongue, At large, it seems, thou rovest, and unrestrain'd, 450 No deference paid to my authority: But on thy mother ever pouring forth Bitter invectives, while the listening crowd Are taught to hold me proud and fierce of soul; A lawless tyrant, slandering thee and thine. I am no slanderer: I abhor the name: But, oft reviled, of force I must reply. And send my foul reproaches back upon thee. Thou say'st I slew thy father; that alone Is left to plead for all thy insolence. 460 I do confess the deed, and glory in it. I slew thy father; yet not I alone; I had the hand of justice to assist me, And should have had Electra's: well thou know'st, That cruel father, for whom thus thy tears 465 Incessant flow, that father slew his child. He—he alone, of all the Grecian host, Gave up his daughter—horrid sacrifice! To the offended gods: he never felt A mother's pangs, and therefore thought not of them; Or if he did, why slay the innocent? For Greece, thou tell'st me: Greece could never claim

of his master's chariot, which broke in pieces in the middle of the course. Pelops espoused Hippodamia, but afterward, instead of performing his promise to Myrtilus, chose rather to get rid of this instrument of treachery by throwing him into the ass. Mercury, who, it seems, was the father of Myrtilus, revenged the murder of his son, by entailing curses on Pelops and all his posterity. It appears by this that the heathens believed that God punished the crimes of fathers on their children, to the third and fourth generation.

A right to what was mine: or did she fall For Menelaus! he had children too: Why might not they have died? Their parents' guilt. 475 Source of the war, more justly had deserved it. Or think'st thou Death with keener appetite Could feast on mine, and Helen's not afford As sweet a banquet! Why was all the love To me and to my child so justly due, 480 With lavish hand bestow'd on Menelaus ! Was he not then a base, inhuman father? He was: and so, could Iphigenia speak, Thy breathless sister, she too would declare. Know then I grieve not; shame or penitence 485 I feel not for the deed; and if to thee It seems so heinous, weigh each circumstance; Remember what he did, and lay the blame On him, who well deserved the fate he suffer'd. ELEC. Thou hast no plea for bitterness like this:

Thou canst not say that I provoked thee to it. 491
I have been silent: had I leave to speak,
I could defend an injured father's cause,
And tell thee wherefore Iphigenia fell.

CLY. I do permit thee; and if modest thus 495 Thou hadst address'd me always, thy free speech Had ne'er offended.

ELEC. Hast thou not confess'd
That thou didst slay my father? Whether Justice
Approve or not, 'twas horrid to confess it:
But Justice never could persuade thee: no,
I'll tell thee who it was: it was Ægisthus,
The wretch with whom thou livest. Go, ask the

goddess,
The immortal huntress, why the winds were stay'd
So long at Aulis; but thou must not ask
The chaste Diana; take it then from me.
My father once, as, for the chase prepared,
Careless he wander'd through her sacred grove,
Forth from its covert roused a spotted hind

Of fairest form, with towering antiers graced, Pursued, and slew her: of the Deity 510 Something, with pride elate, he utter'd then Disdainful: quick resenting the affront, Latona's daughter stay'd the Grecian fleet, Nor would forgive, till for her slaughter'd beast The offending father sacrificed his child. 515 Thus Iphigenia fell; and but for her, Greece ne'er had seen, or Ilion's lofty towers. Or her own native soil: the father strove In vain to save: and not for Menelaus He gave her up at last, but for his country. **590** Suppose a brother's fondness had prevail'd. And she was given for him; would that excuse Thy horrid deed? what law required it of thee? That law alone by which thyself must fall: If blood for blood be due, thy doom is fix'd. 595 Plead not so poorly then; but tell me why Thou livest adulterous thus with a vile ruffian. Thy base assistant? Why are those, who sprung From thy first nuptials, cast unkindly forth, For his new race! Was this thy piety! 530 Was this too to revenge thy daughter's death? In pure revenge to wed her deadliest foe Was noble, was it not? but I forget. You are my mother, so it seems you say, And I must hold my peace; but I deny it: **535** I say you are my mistress, not my mother: A cruel mistress that afflicts my soul. And makes this weary life a burden to me. Orestes too, the hapless fugitive, Who once escaped thy fatal hand, now drags A loathsome being: him, thou say'st, I look'd for To join in my revenge, and so I did: I would have been revenged. I tell thee so. Say, I am base, malicious, impudent, Abusive, what thou wilt; for if I am, 545 It speaks my birth, and I resemble thee.

575

Сно. Resentment deep hath fired the virgin's breast: Whether with truth and justice on her side She speak, I know not. CLY. Can they plead for her! What care, what love, or tenderness is due 550 To an abandon'd child, who, shameless, thus Reviles a parent? Is there, after this, A crime in nature she would blush to act? ELEC. I am not base, nor shameless, as thou call'st For know, e'en now I blush for what is past, 555 Indecent warmth, and words that ill become My tender years and virgin modesty: But 'twas thy guilt, thy malice, urged me to it. From bad examples bad alone we learn; I only err'd because I follow'd thee. 560 CLY. Impudent wretch! and am I then the cause Of all thy clamorous insolence? Elec. Thou art: Foul is thy speech, because thy deed was foul; For words from actions flow. By chaste Diana. Soon as Ægisthus comes, thy boldness meets Its just reward. Is this thy promised leave, So lately granted, freely to unfold What now, incensed, thou dost refuse to hear? CLY. Have I not heard thee; and, in base return. With luckless omen dost thou now retard 570 My pious sacrifice ? O! far from me ELEC. Be guilt like that; perform it, I beseech thee: In holy silence shall these lips be closed,

And not a word escape to thwart thy purpose.
CLY. [speaking to one of her attendants.]
Hither do thou the sacred offerings bring,
Of various fruits composed, that to the god,
Whose altars we adorn, my fervent prayer

ຕິລ

May rise accepted, and dispel my fears.

Hear then, Apollo, great protector! hear
My secret vows, for with no friendly ear
My voice is heard; her malice would betray,
Should I unveil my heart, each word I utter'd,
And scatter idle rumours through the crowd.

Thus then accept my prayers, Lycean Phoebus!

[aloud. If in the doubtful visions of the night, 585 Which broke my slumbers, aught presaging good Thou seest, propitious, O! confirm it all: But if of dire portent, and fraught with ill. To me and mine they came, avert the omen, And send the evil back upon my foes! 500 O! if there are, whose fraudful arts conspire To cast me forth from all my present bliss, Let them not prosper, but protect me still. Grant me to live and reign in quiet here, To spend each happy hour with those I love; With those my children who have ne'er offended By malice, pride, and bitterness of soul: Grant this, indulgent Phœbus! What remains Unask'd, thou seest; for naught escapes the eye Of gods; such knowledge have the sons of Jove. 600

GOVERNOR OF ORESTES, CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Gov. Is this the royal palace of Ægisthus?

Сно. Stranger, it is.

Gov.

And this (for such her form
And look majestic speak her) is his queen;

Is it not so!
CHO. It is.
Gov. Great sovereign, hail!

596 Iphianassa and Chrysothemis, who had not affronted her, in opposition to Electra, who had.

598 Most probably the death of Orestes and Electra, which she did not dare to mention in the presence of her daughter. Clytemnestra's character is finely drawn; her very prayers we see are wicked, and agreeable to her actions.

With joyful news I come, and from a friend, 605
To thee, and to Ægisthus.
CLY. Stranger, welcome!
Say, first, from whom thy message?
Gov. From Phanoteus:
A Phocian sends thee things of utmost moment.
CLY. Of moment, say'st thou! what! impart
them quick!
Of friendly import, if from thence they come, 610
I know they must be.
Gov. Briefly, then, 'tis this;
Orestes is no more.
Elec. Undone Electra!
Now am I lost indeed.
CLY. What say'st thou ! speak!
Regard not her; go on.
Gov. I say again,
Orestes is no more.
ELEC. Then what am I? 615
I too am nothing.
CLY. [to Electra.] Get thee hence! away!
Disturb us not. Most welcome messenger!
[to the Governor.
Go on, I beg thee; let me hear it all;
Say how he died; tell every circumstance.
Gov. For that I came, and I will tell thee all. 620
Know, then, Orestes, at the Pythian games,
Eager for glory, met assembled Greece.
Soon as the herald's far-resounding voice
Proclaim'd the course, the graceful youth appear'd,
And was by all admired: successful soon 625
He reach'd the goal, and bore his prize away.
Ne'er did these eyes behold such feats perform'd
By mortal strength; in every course superior,
He rose victorious: theme of every tongue
Was the brave Argive, great Atrides' son, 630
Who led the Grecian host; but, O! in vain
Doth human valour strive when power divine
Pursues vindictive · the succeeding morn

Uprose the sun, and with him all the train Of youthful rivals in the chariot-race; 635 One from Achaia, one from Sparta came; Of Afric's sons advanced a noble pair. And join'd the throng: with these, Orestes drove His swift Thessalian steeds; Ætolia next, For yellow coursers famed; and next Magnesia: 640 And Athens, built by hands divine, sent forth Her skilful charioteer; an Ænian next Drove his white horses through the field; and last A brave Bœotian closed the warrior train. And now, in order ranged, as each by lot Determined stood, forth at the trumpet's sound They rush'd together, shook their glittering reins, And lash'd their foaming coursers o'er the plain. Loud was the din of rattling cars, involved In dusty clouds; close on each other press'd The rival youths, together stopp'd, and turn'd Together all. The hapless Ænian first, His fiery steeds, impatient of subjection, Entangled on the Libvan chariot hung. Confusion soon and terror through the crowd 655 Disastrous spread; the jarring axles rung; Wheel within wheel now crack'd, till Chrysa's field Was with the scatter'd ruins quite o'erspread. The Athenian, cautious, view'd the distant danger, Drew in the rein, and turn'd his car aside; Then pass'd them all. Orestes, who, secure Of conquest, lagg'd behind, with eager pace Now urged his rapid course, and swift pursued. Sharp was the contest; now the Athenian first, And now Orestes o'er his coursers hung; 665 Now side by side they ran. When to the last And fatal goal they came, Atrides' son, As chance with slacken'd rein he turn'd the car, Full on the pillar struck, tore from the wheel Its brittle spokes, and from his seat down dropp'd Precipitate: entangled in the reins, 671 His fiery coursers dragg'd him o'er the field,

While shricking crowds with pity view'd the youth, Whose gallant deeds deserved a better fate. Scarce could they stop the rapid car, or loose 675 His mangled corse, so drench'd in blood, so changed, That scarce a friend could say it was Orestes. Straight on the pile they burned his sad remains; And, in an urn enclosed, a chosen few, From Phocis sent, have brought his ashes home, 680 To reap due honours in his native land. Thus have I told thee all; a dreadful tale! But, O! how far more dreadful to behold it, And be, like me, a witness of the scene!

Cho. Ah me! the royal race, the ancient house

Of my beloved master is no more!
CLy.
Great Jove! 686
The event was happy, but 'tis mix'd with wo.

For, O! 'tis bitter to reflect, that life And safety must be purchased by misfortunes.

Gov. Why grieve you, madam!

CLY. 'Tis a bitter task 690
To bring forth children: though a mother's wrong'd,
A mother cannot hate the babe she bore.

Gov. Then with ungrateful news in vain I came.
CLv. O no; most welcome is the man who brings
Such joyful tidings, that a thankless child
Is gone, who left a tender mother's arms,
To live a voluntary exile from me;
Ne'er to these eyes return'd, but absent raged,
And threaten'd vengeance for his murder'd father.
Day had no rest for me, nor did the night
Tobring needful slumbers; thoughts of instant death
Appall'd me ever; but my fears are gone;
He cannot hurt me now; nor, worse than him,
This vile, domestic plague, who haunts me still,

Spite of her threats, shall Clytemnestra live.

Elec. Now, my Orestes! I indeed must mourn
Thy cruel fate, imbitter'd by reproach,
And from a mother's tongue. This is not well.

To suck my vital blood; but henceforth safe,

CLY. With him it is, and would it were with thee! 710 Elec. Attend, O Nemesis! and hear the dead! CLY. She heard that voice which best deserved her ear. And her decrees are just. Go on, proud woman! Insult us now, while Fortune smiles on thee. CLY. Dost thou then hope that we shall fall hereafter ! Elec. No, we are fallen ourselves, and cannot hurt thee. CLY. Thrice worthy is that messenger of joy. Whose gladsome news shall stop thy clamorous tongue. Gov. My task perform'd, permit me to retire. CLy. No, stranger! that were an affront to thee,

And to our friend who sent thee here. Go in, 721
And leave that noisy wretch to bellow forth
Her sorrows, and bewail her lost Orestes.

[Execut Cly. and Gov.

ELEC. Mark'd ye, my friends! did ye observe her tears!

Did she lament him? did the mother weep 725
For her lost child? O no; she smiled, and left me.
Wretched Electra! O my dear Orestes!
Thou hast undone me; thou wert all my hope.
I thought thou wouldst have lived to aid my ven-

geance
For our loved father's death: deprived of both,
Whither shall I betake me! left at last
A slave to those whom most on earth I hate,
The cruel murderers! Must it then be so!
Never, Oh, never! Thus, bereft of all,
Here will I lay me down, and on this spot
End my sad days: if it offend the tyrants,
Let them destroy me; it will be kindly done.

Life is a pain; I would not wish to keep it.

Cно. Where is thy thunder, Jove! or where thy power, O Phæbus! if thou dost behold this deed, 740 And not avenge it? ELEC. 0!Сно. Why mourn'st thou thus? ELEC. Alas! Сно. O! do not groan thus. Thou destroy'st me. ELEC. Сно. How have I hurt thee ! Why thus vainly try ELEC. To give me comfort when I know he's dead? You but insult my woes. Сно. Yet weep not thus: 745 Think on the golden bracelet that betray'd Amphiaraus, who now---ELEC. O me ! In bliss Сно. Immortal reigns among the shades below. ELEC. Alas! Сно. No more: a woman was the cause, The accursed cause. Elec. She suffer'd, did she not? 750 Cно. She did; she perish'd. Yes; I know it well: He found a kind avenger of his wrongs: But I have none, for he is ravish'd from me. Cнo. Thou art indeed unhappy. Tis too true: ELEC. I am most wretched; it beats hard on me: 755 My sorrows never cease.

756 Amphiaraus was a famous soothsayer. During the time of the Theban war, he was solicited by Adrastus to assist Polynices, his son-in-law. Amphiaraus, foreseeing by his art that if he went he should be slain, hid himself, but was discovered by his wife Eriphyle, whom Polynices had bribed with a golden bracelet. Amphiaraus, being thus obliged to appear at the siege of Thebes, perished there. Alcmeon, his son, revenged his father's death, and alew his mother Eriphyle.

We see thy woes.

Elec. Therefore no more attempt to bring me comfort:

There is no hope.

What sav'st thou? Сно.

There is none: ELEC.

None left for me, my noble brother slain.

Cнo. Death is the lot of human race.

But, O! 760 ELEC. Not death like his: entangled in the reins.

His mangled body dragg'd along the field.

Cно. A strange, unthought-of chance!

And then to fall

A wretched stranger in a foreign land! Cно. O horrible!

ELEC. No sister there to close 765 His dying eyes, to grace him with a tomb, Or pay the sad last tributary tear.

ACT III.

CHRYSOTHEMIS, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

770

CHRY. Forgive me, sister, if my hasty steps Press unexpected on thee: but I come With joyful tidings, to relieve thy toils, And make thee happy. What canst thou have found ELEC.

To soften ills that will admit no cure?

CHAY. Orestes is arrived: as sure as here I stand before thee, the dear youth is come.

ELEC. Canst thou then make a mockery of my W065,

Or dost thou rave ?

· CHRY. No, by our father's gods,

I do not mean to scoff: but he is come.

Elec. Alas! who told thee so? What tongue deceived

Thy credulous ear?

CHRY. Know, from myself alone I learn'd the truth, and confirmations strong 780 Oblige me to believe it.

What firm proof ELEC. Canst thou produce? What hast thou seen or known

To raise such flattering hopes?

O! by the gods I beg thee but to hear me; then approve

Or blame impartial.

If to tell thy tale 785 Can give thee pleasure, say it; I attend. CHRY. Know, then, that soon as to our father's

tomb Eager I came, my wondering eyes beheld Down from its side a milky fountain flow, 790 As lately pour'd by some benignant hand. With various flowers the sacred spot adorn'd, Increased my doubts: on every side I look'd And listen'd long, impatient for the tread Of human footsteps there; but all was peace. Fearless approaching then the hallow'd spot. 795 I saw it spread with fresh devoted hair. Instant my soul recall'd its dearest hope, Nor doubted whence the pious offerings came. I snatch'd them up, and silent gazed, while joy Sprang in my heart, and filled my eyes with tears. They were, they must be his; ourselves alone 801 Excepted, who could bring them! "Twas not I, And 'tis not given to thee to leave these walls -E'en for the gods: our mother scarce would do So good an office; or, e'en grant she might, 805 We must have known it soon. Be confident, It was Orestes then; rejoice, Electra! Sister, rejoice; the same destructive power Doth not for ever rule: behold at last A milder god, and happier days appear. 810 Errc. Madness and folly! how I pity thee!

CHEY. Have I not brought most joyful tidings to thee ?

80PH.—H

ELEC. Alas! thou knowst not where nor what thou art. CHRY. Not know it! not believe what I have seen! ELEC. I tell thee, wretched as thou art. he's dead : 815 He and thy hoped-for bliss are gone together. Thou must not think of it. A wretch indeed CHRY. I am, if this be so; but, O! from whom, Where didst thou learn the fatal news? ELEC. From one Who was a witness of his death. Where is he? 820 CHRY. Amazement chills my soul. ELEC. He is within. And no unwelcome guest to Clytemnestra. CHRY. Alas! who then could bring these pious gifts ? Elec. Some friend to lost Orestes placed them there. CHRY. I flew with joy to tell thee better news, 825 And little thought to hear so sad a tale. The griefs I came to cure are present still, And a new weight of woes is come upon us. ELEC. But know, my sister! all may yet be well. If thou wilt hear me. CHRY. Can I raise the dead? 830 ELEC. I am not mad, that I should ask it of thee. CHRY. What wouldst thou have me do? I'd have thee act ELEC. As I shall dictate to thee. If aught good It may produce, I do consent. ELEC. Remember. That if we hope to prosper, we must bear: 835 Success, in all that's human, must depend On patience and on toil. I know it well. CHRY. And stand resolved to bear my part in all.

Elec. Hear then the solemn purport of my soul. Thou know'st too well how friendless and forlorn We both are left, by death bereaved of all Who could support us. While Orestes lived. I cherished flattering thoughts of sweet revenge; But he is gone, and thou art now my hope. Yes, thou must join (for I will tell thee all) 845 With thy Electra to destroy Ægisthus. To kill the murderer why should we delay? Is aught of comfort left? Thou canst but weep Thy ravish'd fortunes torn unjustly from thee: Thou canst but mourn thy loss of nuptial rites, 850 And each domestic bliss; for, O my sister! The tyrant cannot be so weak of soul. As e'er to suffer our detested race To send new branches forth for his destruction. Assist me then; so shalt thou best deserve 855 A father's praises and a brother's love: So shalt thou still, as thou wert born, be free. And gain a partner worthy of thy bed. Dost thou not hear the applauding voice of Fame, And every tongue conspire to praise the deed! 860 Will they not mark us as they pass along, And cry aloud, "Behold the noble pair! The pious sisters who preserved their race! Whose daring souls, unawed by danger, sought The tyrant's life, regardless of their own. What love to these, what reverence is due! These shall the assembled nation throng to praise. And every feast with public honours crown, The fit reward of more than female virtue!" Thus will they talk, my sister! while we live. And after death our names shall be immortal. Aid then a brother's, aid a sister's cause, Think on thy father's wrongs, preserve Electra, Preserve thyself; and oh! remember well, That, to the noble mind, a life dishonour'd 875 Is infamy and shame.

Сно.: Be prudence now The guide of both. Her mind was sure disturb'd. CHRY. My friends, or she would ne'er have talked so wildly. Tell me. I beg thee, tell me, my Electra. How couldst thou think so rash an enterprise Could e'er succeed, or how request my aid ? Hast thou consider'd what thou art? a woman. Weak and defenceless, to thy foes unequal. Fortune, thou seest, each hour flows in upon them. Nor deigns to look on us. What hand shall deal The fatal blow, and pass unpunish'd for it? 886 Take heed, my sister, lest, thy counsel heard, A heavier fate than that we now lament Fall on us both: what will our boasted fame Avail us then? It is not death alone We have to fear; to die is not the worst Of human ills: it is to wish for death. And be refused the boon. Consider well. Ere we destroy ourselves and all our race. Be patient, dear Electra! for thy words, 895 As they had ne'er been utter'd, here they rest. Learn to be wise at last, and when thou know'st Resistance vain, submit to powers superior. Сно. Submit, convinced that prudence is the first Of human blessings. ELEC. Tis as I expected; 800 I knew full well thou wouldst reject my counsel: But I can act alone; nor shall this arm Shrink at the blow, or leave its work unfinished. CERY. Would thou hadst shown this so much vaunted prowess When our loved father died! ELEC. I was the same 905 By nature then, but of a weaker mind. CHRY. Be sure thy courage fail thee not hereafter.

ELEC. Thy aid will ne'er increase it.

'Twill be wanted:

CHRY.

For those who act thus rashly must expect
The fate they merit.
Elec. I admire thy prudence, 910
But I detest thy cowardice.
Chry. I hear thee
With patience; for the time must one day come
When thou shalt praise me.
Elec. Never.
CHRY. Be that left
For time to judge; enough remains.
Elec. Away;
There's no dependence on thee.
CHRY. But there is, 915
Hadst thou a mind disposed for its acceptance.
Elec. Go, tell thy mother all.
Chry. I am not yet
So much thy enemy. Elec. And yet would lead me
To infamy.
CHRY. To safety and to wisdom.
Elec. Must I then judge as thy superior reason
May dictate to me?
CHRY. When thy better mind 921
Shall come, I'll not refuse to follow thee.
ELEC. Pity, who talks so well should act so
poorly!
CHRY. That censure falls on thee.
ELEC. What I have said
Is truth.
CHRY. Truth, sister, may be dangerous. 925
Elec. Rather than thus submit I will not live.
Ohry. Hereafter thou wilt praise me.
Elec. I shall act
As seems most fit, nor wait for thy direction.
Chry. Art thou resolved then? Wilt thou not
repent,
And take my counsel?
Elec. Counsel such as thine 930
Is of all ills the worst.
TT O

Because, Electra. CHRY. Thou dost not seem to understand it. Know, then, That long ere this I had determined all. Chry. Then fare thee well: thou canst not bear my words, Nor I thy actions. Go thy ways: henceforth ELEC. I will not commune with thee; nor thy prayers, No. nor thy tears, should ever bend me to it: Such idle commerce were the height of folly. CHRY. If thou dost think this wisdom, think so still : But when destruction comes, thou wilt approve 940 My better counsel, and be wise too late. [Excunt. CHORUS. STROPHE I. Man's ungrateful, wretched race Shall the birds of heaven disgrace, Whose ever-watchful, ever-pious young Protect the feeble parent whence they sprung! 945 But if the blast of angry Jove Hath power to strike, or Justice reigns above. Not long unpunish'd shall such crimes remain; When thou, O Fame! the messenger of wo. Shalt bear these tidings to the realms below.— Tidings, to Grecia's chiefs, of sorrow and of pain. ANTISTROPHE I. Bid the sad Atridæ mourn. 952 Their house by cruel faction torn; Tell them, no longer by affection join'd The tender sisters bear a friendly mind. 955 The poor Electra, now alone. Making her fruitless, solitary moan, Like Philomela, weeps her father's fate; Fearless of death, and every human ill. Resolved her steady vengeance to fulfil:

Was ever child so good, or piety so great?

965

970

STROPHE II.

Still are the virtuous and the good By adverse fortune unsubdued, Nor e'er will stoop to infamy and shame:

Thus Electra dauntless rose,

The war to wage with virtue's foes, To gain the meed of never-ending fame.

ANTISTROPHE II.
Far, far above thy enemies.

In power and splendour mayst thou rise,

And future bliss compensate present wo!
For thou hast shown thy pious love,

By all that's dear to Heaven above, Or sacred held by mortals here below.

here below. [Excunt.

ACT IV.

ORESTES, PYLADES, with attendants, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Ores. Say, virgins, if, by right instruction led, This way I tend to—

Сно. Whither wouldst thou go ? 975

Ones. The palace of Ægisthus.
Cho. Stranger, well

Wert thou directed; thou art there already.

ORES. Who, then, among your train shall kindly speak

A friend's approach, who comes with joyful news .

Of highest import?

Cho. Be that office hers, [pointing to Electra.] 980 Whom, bound by nature's ties, it best befits.

Ores. Go, then, and say, from Phocis are arrived Who beg admittance to the king.

Elec. Alas

And comest thou, then, to prove the dreadful tale Already told?

Orgs. What you have heard I know not; 985 But of Orestes came I here to speak, By Strophius' command.

What is it! say. ELEC. O, how I dread thy message! ORES. [showing the urn.] Here behold His poor remains-O lost, undone Electra! Elec. "Tis then too plain, and misery is complete. 990 ORES. If for Orestes thus thy sorrows flow, Know that within this urn his ashes lie. Elec. Do they, indeed? Then let me, by the gods I do entreat thee, let me snatch them from thee: Let me embrace them, let me weep my fate, And mourn our hapless race. Ores. Give her the urn. Whoe'er she be; for not with hostile mind She craves the boon: perhaps some friend; perhaps Bv blood united. ELEC. [taking the urn.] O, ye dear remains Of my Orestes, the most loved of men! 1000 How do I see thee now! how much unlike What my fond hopes presaged, when last we parted! I sent thee forth with all the bloom of youth Fresh on thy cheek; and now, O dismal change! I bear thee in these hands an empty shade. 1005 Would I had died ere I had sent thee hence, Ere I had saved thee from the tyrant's hand! Would thou hadst died thyself that dreadful day, And join'd thy murder'd father in the tomb. Rather than thus, a wretched exile fallen, 1010 Far from thy sister in a foreign land! I was not there with pious hands to wash Thy breathless corpse, or from the greedy flame To gather up thy ashes. What have all

My pleasing toils, my fruitless cares availed,

E'en from thy infant years; that as a mother I watched thee still, and as a mother loved? I would not trust thee to a servant's hand, but was myself the guardian of thy youth, Thy dear companion: all is gone with thee.

1015

1020

Alas! thy death, like the devouring storm. Hath borne down all: my father is no more. And thou art gone, and I am going too. Our foes rejoice; our mother, mad with joy, Smiles at our miseries; that unnatural mother. She whom thou oft hast promised to destroy; But cruel fate hath blasted all my hopes, And for my dear Orestes left me naught But this poor shadow. O! the accursed place, Where I had sent thee! O my hapless brother! Thou hast destroy'd Electra: take me, then, O take me to thee! let this urn enclose My ashes too, and dust to dust be join'd. That we may dwell together once again. In life united by one hapless fate, 1035 I would not wish in death to be divided: The dead are free from sorrows.

Fair Electra! Do not indulge thy griefs; but, O! remember, Sprung from a mortal like thyself, Orestes Was mortal too; that we are mortal all. 1040 Ores. [aside.] What shall I say! I can refrain no

longer. ELEC. Why this emotion?

ORES. [looking at Electra.] Can it be Electra?

That lovely form! ELEC. It is, indeed, that wretch.

Ores. O dreadful!

Stranger! dost thou weep for me! ORES. By impious hands to perish thus!

For me 1045

Doubtless thou weep'st, for I am changed indeed.

Ores. Of nuptial rites, and each domestic joy To live deprived!

ELEC. Why dost thou gaze upon me! Ores. Alas! I did not know I was so wretched.

ELEC. Why, what hath made thee so?

Ores. I see thy woes.

ELEC. Not half of them.

Can there be worse than these! ORES. Elec. To live with murderers? What murderers! whom! Elec. The murderers of my father: bound to serve them. Ores. Who binds thee? One who calls herself a mother:— A name she little merits. But say how! 1055 Doth she withhold the means of life, or act With brutal violence to thee? Both, alas! Are my hard lot; she tries a thousand means To make me wretched. And will none assist, Will none defend thee? ELEC. None. My only hope 1060 Lies buried there. O, how I pity thee! ELEC. 'Tis kindly done; for none will pity me, None but thyself. Art thou indeed a stranger. Or doth some nearer tie unite our sorrows? Ores. I could unfold a tale;—but, say, these virgins! 1065 May I depend on them? ELEC. They are our friends. And faithful all. ORES. Then lay the urn aside, And I will tell thee. ELEC. Do not take it from me: Do not, dear stranger! But I must indeed. ORES. Elec. Do not, I beg thee. Come, you'll not repent it. 1070 ELEC. O my poor brother! if thy dear remains Are wrested from me, I am most unhappy. Ores. No more; thou must not grieve for him. Elec. Not grieve For my Orestes!

No; you should not weep. Ores. Elec. Am I unworthy of him then? O. no! 1075 But do not grieve. Not when I bear the ashes ELEC. Of my dear brother? ORES. But they are not there,' Unless by fiction, and a well-wrought tale That hath deceived thee. ELEC. Where then is his tomb? Ores. The living need none. ELEC. Ha! what sav'st thou? Orra. Truth. 1080 Elec. Does he then live ! ORES. If I have life, he lives. Elec. And art thou he? Look here, and be convinced: This mark, 'tis from our father. O bless'd hour! Erre. Ores. Blessed indeed! Art thou then here? ELEC. ORES. I am. Elec. Do I embrace thee ? Mayst thou do it long! 1085 Elec. O my companions! O my dearest friends! Do ye not see Orestes, once by art And cruel fiction torn from life and me, But now by better art to life restored? Cно. Daughter! we do; and see, mid all our woes, 1090 From every eve fast flow the tears of joy. ELEC. O, ye are come, my friends! in happiest hour: E'en to behold, to find again the man Whom your souls wished for, ye are come. Сно. We are: But, O! in silence hide thy joys, Electra! 1095 Elec. Wherefore in silence? CHO. Lest our foes within Should hear thee.

Never, by the virgin power ELEC. Of chaste Diana, will I hide my joys, Or meanly stoop to fear an idle throng Of helpless women. Women have their power. 1100 And that thou know'st. Alas! and so I do: ELEC. For, O! thou hast call'd back the sad remembrance Of that misfortune which admits no cure, And ne'er can be forgot. A fitter time May come, when we must think of that. All times, 1105 Elec. All hours, are fit to talk of justice in. And best the present, now when I am free. Ores. Thou art so; be so still. ELEC. What's to be done! Ores. Talk not, when prudence should restrain thy tongue. ELEC. Who shall restrain it? Who shall bind Electra 1110 To fearful silence, when Orestes comes? When thus I see thee here, beyond my thoughts. Beyond my hopes. Ores. The gods have sent me to thee: They bade me come. Indeed! more grateful still ELEC. Is thy return; if by the gods' command Thou camest, the gods will sure protect thee here. Ores. I would not damp thy joys, and yet I fear Lest they should carry thee too far. Elbc. O. no! But after so long absence, thus return'd To thy afflicted sister; sure thou wouldst not— Orgs. Do what? ELEC. Thou wouldst not grudge me the dear pleasure 1121 Of looking on thee? ORES. No; nor suffer any To rob thee of it.

ELEC.

Shall I then?

Ores. No doubt.

ELEC. I hear that voice, my friends! I never thought

To hear again: ye know, when I received
The dreadful news, I kept my grief within,
Silent and sad; but now I have thee here,
Now I behold thee, now I fix my eyes
On that dear form which never was forgotten.

Ores. Spend not thy time in fruitless words, nor tell me

How Clytemnestra lives, nor how Ægisthus
Hath lavish'd all our wealth: the present hour
Demands our strict'st attention. Tell me, how,
Whether by fraud or open force, our foes
May best be vanquish'd: let no cheerful smile 1135
Betray thee to thy mother; seem to grieve
As thou wert wont; when we have done the deed,
Joy shall appear, and we will smile in safety.

ELEC. Thy will is mine. Not to myself I owe
My present bliss; I have it all from thee, 1140
From thee, my brother! nor should aught persuade
me

To give Orestes e'en a moment's pain: That were ungrateful to the indulgent Power, Who thus hath smiled propitious. Know, Ægisthus Has left the palace; Clytennestra's there; And for thy needless fears that I should smile, Or wear a cheerful face, I never shall. Hatred so strong is rooted in my soul, The sight of them will make me sad enough. The tears of joy perhaps may flow for thee, 1150 And add to the deceit; for flow they must. When I behold thee in one happy hour Thus snatch'd from life, and thus to life restored. I could not hope it: 0, 'tis passing strange! If from the tomb our father should arise, And say, he lived, I think I should believe him; And, O! when thou art come so far, 'tis fit SOPH.-I

I yield to thee in all: do thou direct
My every step; but know, had I been left
Alone, e'en I would not have fail'd in all,
But conquer'd bravely, or as bravely fell.

Ores. No more. I hear the footsteps as of one

Coming this way.

Elec. Strangers! go in, and bear That which with joy they cannot but receive. But which with joy they cannot long possess. 1165

GOVERNOR OF ORESTES, ELECTRA, ORESTES, CONTROL

Gov. Madness and folly thus to linger here! Have ye no thought ? is life not worth your care ? Do ye not know the dangers that surround you! Had I not watch'd myself before the palace. Ere ye had entered, all your secret plan 1170 Had been discovered to your foes within: Wherefore no more of this tumultuous joy, And lengthen'd converse; 'tis not fitting now. Go in; away; delays are dangerous At such an hour: our fate depends upon it. Ores. May I with safety? is all well within? Gov. None can suspect you. ORES. Spake you of my death. As we determined !

Gov. Living as thou art,
They do account thee one among the dead.
Ores. And are they glad? what say they?
Gov. By-and-by
We'll talk of that; let it suffice, that all

We'll talk of that; let it suffice, that all Is right within; and that which most they think so May prove most fatal to them.

Elec. [pointing to the Governor.] Who is this? ORES. Do you not know?

ELEC. I cannot recollect him.
OBES. Not know the man to whom you trusted

Under whose care-

ELEC. When! how!

To Phocis sent, ORES. I 'scaped the tyrant. Can it then be he. ELEC.

Among the faithless only faithful found, When our dear father fell !

ORES. It is the same. Elec. [to Gov.] Dearest of men! great guardian of our race! Art thou then here! thou, who hast saved us both From countless woes? Swift were thy feet to

" Sbring

Glad tidings to me, and thy hand stretch'd forth Its welcome succour: but, O! why deceive me? Why wouldst thou kill me with thy dreadful tale, E'en when thou hadst such happiness in store ! 1196 Hail, father, hail! for I must call thee so: Know, thou hast been to me..in one short day, Both the most hated and most loved of men.

Gov. No more of that: we shall have time enough 1201 To talk of it hereafter. Let us go; This is the hour; the queen is now alone, And not a man within: if ve delay, Expect to meet more formidable foes. In wisdom and in numbers far superior.

Ores. We will not talk, my Pylades! but act. Let us go in; but to the gods, who guard This place, be first due adoration paid.

Elec. Hear, then, Apollo! great Lycæan! hear Their humble prayer. O! hear Electra too, Who with unsparing hand her choicest gifts Hath never fail'd to lay before thy altars. Accept the little all which now remains For me to give: accept my humblest prayers, My vows, my adorations; smile propitious 1215 On all our counsels. O! assist us now, And show mankind what punishment remains For guilty mortals from offended Heaven! [Exeunt.

CHORUS. STROPHE.

Behold, he comes! the slaughter-breathing god,
Mars, ever thirsting for the murderer's blood: 1930
And see, the dogs of war are close behind.
Naught can escape their all-devouring rage:
This did my conscious heart long since presage,

And the fair dream that strong since presage,

The avenger steals along, with silent feet,
And sharpened sword, to his paternal seat,
His injured father's wrongs to vindicate:
Conceal'd from all by Maia's fraudful son,
Who safe conducts him till the deed be done.
Nor longer will delay the needful work of fate. 1330

ACT V.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELEC. O my dear friends! they are about it now;
The deed is doing: but be still.
CHO.
What deed!

How! where!

ELEC. She doth prepare the funeral banquet; But they are not far from her.

CHO. Why then leave them!

ELEC. To watch Ægisthus, lest he steal upon us,

And blast our purpose.

1228 Mercury, the son of Jupiter and Maia, was the god of fraud and treachery. The propriety of Mercury's peculiar assistance in this place may likewise be accounted for from his relation to Myrtillus, who was slain by Pelops.

1233 The Greek funeral banquet, which was usually spread on the tomb of the deceased by the nearest relation. This banquet Electra imagines that Clytemnestra was already preparing for Orestes, whom she supposed dead: "but they," says she, "are not far from her;" that is, they who are preparing one for her. The sentence, we see, is purposely unfinished.

1256

CLY. [behind the scenes.] O! I am betrayed! 1236 My palace full of murderers! not a friend Left to protect me!

Elec. Some one cries within:

Did you not hear ?

CHO. It is too horrible

For mortal ear: I tremble at the sound. 1240
CLy. [within.] Ægisthus! O! where art thou!
ELEC. Hark! again

The voice, and louder.

CLY. [within.] O! my child, my child! Pity thy mother! pity her who bore thee!

ELEC. Be thine the pity which thou show'dst to him.

And to his father.

Сно. O! unhappy kingdom! 1245 O, wretched race! thy misery is full: This day will finish all.

CLY. [within.] O! I am wounded!

ELEC. Another stroke! Another, if thou canst.

CLY. [within.] Ah me! again?

ELEC. O, that Ægisthus too

Groan'd with thee now!

Cho. Then vengeance is complete: 1250 The dead arise, and shed their murderous blood In copious streams.

ORESTES, PYLADES, GOVERNOR OF ORESTES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELEC. Behold them here: their hands Dropping with gore;—a pious sacrifice

To the great god of war. How is't, Orestes!
ORES. 'Tis very well, all's well: if there be truth

In great Apollo's oracles, she's dead.

Thou need'st not fear a cruel mother now.

Сно. No more; Ægisthus comes.

Elec. Instant go in.

Do you not see him! joyful he returns.

Сно. Retire; thus far is right: go on, and prosper. Ores. Fear not, we'll do it. But immediately. ORES. I'm gone. [Exeunt Orestes, Pylades, and Gov. For what remains here to be done. Be it my care: I'll whisper in his ear A few soft flattering words, that he may rush

ÆGISTRUS, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Æeis. Which of you knows aught of these Phocian guests,

1965

Who come to tell us of Orestes' death! You first I ask, Electra! once so proud And fierce of soul. It doth concern you most: And therefore you, I think, can best inform me. 1970 Elec. Yes, I can tell thee: is it possible

I should not know it?—what were not to know A circumstance of dearest import to me?

Ægis. Where are they, then?

ELEC. Within.

Unknowing, down precipitate, on ruin.

Ægis. And spake they truth ! ELEC. They did; a truth not proved by words alone,

But facts undoubted.

Ægis. Shall we see him, then ? ELEC. Ay, and a dreadful sight it is to see. Ægis. Thou art not wont to give me so much joy; Now I am glad indeed.

ELEC. Glad mayst thou be,

If aught there is in that can give thee joy. 1280 Egs. Silence within; and let my palace gates Be open'd all, that Argos and Mycenæ May send her millions forth to view the sight; And if there are who nourish idle hopes That still Orestes lives, behold him here, 1285 And learn submission, nor inflame the crowd

Against their lawful sovereign, lest they feel An angry monarch's heaviest vengeance on them. Elec.' Already I have learn'd the task, and yield

To power superior.

Scene opens, and discovers the body of Clytemnestra extended on a bier and covered with a veil.

ORESTES, PYLADES, GOVERNOR OF ORESTES, ÆGISTHUS, ELECTRA, CHORUS, and a crowd of speciators from the city.

What a sight is here! ÆG18. O deity supreme! this could not be But by thy will; and whether Nemesis Shall still o'ertake me for my crime I know not. Take off the veil, that I may view him well; He was by blood allied, and therefore claims Our decent sorrows.

Take it off thyself: 'Tis not my office; thee it best befits

To see and to lament. ÆGIS.

And so it does. And I will do it: send Clytemnestra hither.

[Taking off the veil. Orgs. She is before thee.

Ha! what do I see! 1300 Ores. Why, what's the matter? what affrights

thee so? Do you not see him?

In what dreadful snare Ægis.

Am I then fallen?

Dost thou not now behold That thou art talking with the dead?

Alas! Ægis.

Too well I see it, and thou art—Orestes. 1305 Ores. So great a prophet thou, and guess so ill? Ægis. I know that I am lost, undone for ever: But let me speak to thee.

Do not. Orestes! ELEC.

No. not a word. What can a moment's space

Profit a wretch like him, to death devoted?

Quick let him die, and cast his carcass forth

To dogs and vultures; they will best perform

Fit obsequies for him; by this alone

We can be free and happy.

Ores. Get thee in;
This is no time for talk; thy life, thy life. 1315
Æeis. But why go in! If what thou mean'st to
do

Be just, what need of darkness to conceal it? Why not destroy me here?

Organia over deep fother fell and parish there

Where our dear father fell, and perish there. 1320

ÆGIS. 'This palace then is doom'd to be the
witness

Of all the present, all the future woes Of Pelop's hapless race.

Orgs. Of thine, at least, It shall be witness: that's my prophecy.

And a most true one.

Æeis. "Tis not from thy father. 1325 Ores. Thou talk'st, and time is lost. Away! Æeis. I follow.

ORES. Thou shalt go first.

ÆGIS. Think'st thou I mean to fly? Ores. No; but I'd make thy end most bitter to

thee
In every circumstance, nor let thee choose
The softest means. Were all like thee to perish
Who violate the laws, 'twould lessen much 1331
The guilt of mortals, and reform mankind. [Execut.

CHORUS.

O race of Atreus! after all thy woes, How art thou thus, by one adventurous deed, To freedom and to happiness restored!

PHILOCTETES.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ULYSSES, king of Ithaca.
NEOPTOLEMUS, son of Achilles.
PHILOCTETES, son of Pæan, and companion of Hercules.
A SPY.
HERCULES.
CHORUS, composed of the companions of Ulysses and Neoptolemus.

PHILOCTETES.

ARGUMENT.

PHILOCTETES, the son of Psean, had been honoured with the friendship of Hercules, who at his death bequeathed to him his bow, together with the poisoned arrows dipped in the blood of the hydra. Philoctetes, after this, being in search of an altar dedicated to his deceased friend in the island of Chrysa, was there bit by a serpent: the wound festered, and an incurable ulcer ensued; notwithstanding which, he pro ceeded to the siege of Troy, where the wound growing desperate, his continual cries and groans so interrupted the motions of the war and disheartened the soldiers, that the Grecian chiefs thought it advisable to remove him from the army; and Ulysses was accordingly commissioned to carry him to Lem nos, an uninhabited island in the Ægean Sea, and there to leave him. In this miserable situation he remained for ten years; when the oracle informed the Greeks that Troy could never be conquered without the arrows of Hercules, then in the possession of Philoctetes. Ulysses and Neoptolemus were despatched with directions to bring him to the siege. The son of Achilles, at the suggestion of his crafty companion, introduced himself to the wounded hero with an artful enumeration of affronts, which he pretended to have received from the Greeks; and having thus insimuated himself into his confidence, he contrived to get possession of the bow and fatal arrows: and the artifice was nearly brought to a successful termination, when, struck with remorse, Neoptolemus revealed his whole design to Philoctetes; and, at his earnest entreaties, restored him his weapons, in spite of the remonstrances of Ulysses. The services thus rendered by Neoptolemus were insufficient, however, to persuade Philoctetes to accompany him to Troy; when Hercules descended from the skies, and presently overcame all his scruples by the promise of a com plete cure of his wounds by the skill of Esculapius.

ACT I.

Scene, Lemnos, near a grotto, in a rock by the sea-side.

ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, ATTENDANT.

ULYS. AT length, my noble friend! thou bravest Of a brave father, father of us all, The great Achilles! we have reach'd the shore Of sea-girt Lemnos, desert and forlorn, Where never tread of human step is seen, Or voice of mortal heard, save his alone, Poor Philoctetes, Pæan's wretched son, Whom here I left (for such were my commands From Grecia's chiefs), when, by his fatal wound Oppress'd, his greens and execrations dreadful Alarm'd our hosts, our sacred rights profaned, And interrupted holy sacrifice. But why should I repeat the tale! The time Admits not of delay; we must not linger, Lest he discover our arrival here. 15 And all our purposed fraud to draw him hence Be ineffectual: lend me then thy aid. Surveying round thee, canst thou see a rock With double entrance; to the sun's warm rays In winter open, and in summer's heat 20 Giving free passage to the welcome breeze! A little to the left there is a fountain Of living water, where, if yet he breathes, He slakes his thrist: if aught thou seest of this, Inform me; so shall each to each impart Counsel most fit, and serve our common cause.

NEO. [leaving Ulysses a little behind him.] If I mistake not, I behold a cave,

Ev'n such as thou describest.

ULYS. Dost thou? which way

Ngo. Yonder it is; but no path leading thither,

Or trace of human footstep.

	In his cell 30
'Tis chance but he hath lai Look, if he hath not.	d him down to rest;
	the cave.] Not a creature
there.	
tion ?	rk of household prepara-
Nzo. A rustic bed of sca	
ULYS.	What more!
hand,	the work of some rude 35
With a few sticks for fuel.	
ULYS.	This is all
His little treasure here.	
	nhappy man!
Some linen for his wounds	
ULYS.	This must be, then,
His place of habitation: fa	r from hence 40
He cannot roam; distempe	er'd as ne is,
It were impossible. He is	out gone
A little way, for needful fo	od, or nero
Of power, to 'suage and mi	tigate nis pain:
Wherefore despatch this se	
Of observation, whence he His every motion, lest he r	
There's not a Grecian, who	
Could wish to crush beneat	h him og Illvegge
	the attendant, who retires.
Neo He's gone to guard	each avenue; and now,
If thou hast aught of mome	ent to impart 50
Touching our purpose, say	
	nark me well; remember.
What we are doing not on	
Or courage, but on conduct	
Therefore if aught uncomi	
Strange to thy ears, or adv	erse to thy nature.
Reflect that 'tis thy duty to	comply.
And act conjunctive with r	
NEO.	Well! what is it?
SOPH.—K	

ULYS. We must deceive this Philoctetes; that Will be thy task. When he shall ask thee who 60 And what thou art, Achilles' son, reply; Thus far within the verge of truth, no more. Add, that resentment fired thee to forsake The Grecian fleet, and seek thy native soil, Unkindly used by those, who long with vows Had sought thy aid to humble haughty Troy; And when thou camest, ungrateful as they were, The arms of great Achilles, thy just right, Gave to Ulysses: here thy bitter taunts And sharp invectives liberally bestow 70 On me: say what thou wilt, I shall forgive. And Greece will not forgive thee if thou dost not; For against Troy thy efforts are all in vain Without his arrows: safely thou mayst hold Friendship and converse with him, but I cannot. 75 Thou wert not with us when the war began. Nor bound by solemn oath to join our host, As I was; me he knows, and if he find That I am with thee, we are both undone. They must be ours, then, these all-conquering arms: Remember that. I know, thy noble nature Abhors the thought of treachery or fraud: But what a glorious prize is victory! Therefore be bold; we will be just hereafter. Give to deceit and me a little portion 85 Of one short day, and for thy future life Be call'd the holiest, worthiest, best of men. NEO. What but to hear alarms my conscious soul. Son of Laertes! I shall never practise; I was not born to flatter or betray; 90 Nor I, nor he (the voice of fame reports) Who gave me birth. What open arms can do, Behold me prompt to act; but ne'er to fraud Will I descend. Sure we can more than match In strength a foe thus lame and impotent; 95 I came to be a helpmate to thee, not

A base betrayer: and, O king! believe me:

120

Rather, much rather, would I fall by virtue,

Than rise by guilt to certain victory.

ULYS. O noble youth, and worthy of thy sire! 100 When I like thee was young, like thee of strength

And courage boastful, little did I deem Of human policy; but long experience

Hath taught me, son! 'tis not the powerful arm,

But soft, enchanting tongue, that governs all. NEO. And thou wouldst have me tell an odious falsehood?

ULYS. He must be gain'd by fraud.

By fraud! and why Ngo.

Not by persuasion!

He'll not listen to it. ULYS.

And force were vainer still.

What mighty power NEO.

Hath he to boast?

ULYS. His arrows, wing'd with death 110 Inevitable.

Then it were not safe . Neo.

Ev'n to approach him.

ULVa. No: unless by fraud

He be secured.

And think'st thou 'tis not base NEO.

To tell a lie then?

Not if on that lie Ulys.

Depends our safety.

Who shall dare to tell it 115 NEO.

Without a blush? ULYS.

We need not blush at aught That may promote our interest and success.

NEO. But where's the interest that should bias me 1

Come he or not to Troy, imports it aught

To Neoptolemus?

ULYS. Troy cannot fall

Without his arrows.

Saidst thou not, that I NEO.

Was destined to destroy her?

Without him Ulys. Naught canst thou do, and they without thee nothing. NEO. Then I must have them. Ulys. When thou hast, remember. A double prize awaits thee. NEO. What, Ulysses! ULYS. The glorious names of valiant and of wise. NEO. Away; I'll do it. Thoughts of guilt or shame No more appal me. Wilt thou do it, then? Ulys. Wilt thou remember what I told thee of? To. Depend on't; I have promised; that 's suffi-ULYS. Here, then, remain thou; I must not be seen; If thou stay long, I'll send a faithful spy, Who, in a sailor's habit well disguised. May pass unknown; of him, from time to time. What may best suit our purpose thou shalt know. 135 I'll to the ship; farewell; and may the god Who brought us here, the fraudful Mercury, And great Minerva, guardian of our country, And ever kind to me, protect us still! [Exit Ulysses. Сно. Master! instruct us, strangers as we are, 140 What we may utter, what we must conceal. Doubtless the man we seek will entertain Suspicion of us; how are we to act! To those alone belong the art to rule, Who bear the sceptre from the hand of Jove: To thee, of right, devolves the power supreme, From thy great ancestors deliver'd down: Speak, then, our royal lord, and we obey. NEO. If you would penetrate you deep recess.

¹⁴⁰ The Chorus is composed of the soldiers and followers of Ulysses and Neoptolemus; we must not be surprised, therefore, to find them conspiring with their masters to deceive Philoctetes, and throughout the play aiding and assisting the designs of their commanders.

To see the cave where Philoctetes lies,	150	
Go forward; but remember to return		
When the poor wanderer comes this way, prepared	rea	
To aid our purpose here, if need require.		
Cно. O king! we ever meant to fix our eyes On thee, and wait attentive to thy will.	155	
But, tell us, in what part is he conceal'd?	100	
Tis fit we know the place, lest unobserved		
He rush upon us. Which way doth it lie?		
Seest thou his footsteps leading from the cave,		
Or hither bent?		
NEO. [advancing towards the cave.] Behold	M e	
double door	160	
Of his poor dwelling, and the flinty bed.		
Сно. And whither is its wretched master gone	1	
NEO. Doubtless in search of food, and not far	off,	
For such his manner is; accustomed here	-	
(So Fame reports) to pierce with winged arrows	3	
His savage prey for daily sustenance;	166	
His wound still painful, and no hope of cure,		
Сно. Alas! I pity him; without a friend,		
Without a fellow-sufferer, left alone,		
Deprived of all the mutual joys that flow	170	
From sweet society; distemper'd too.		
How can he bear it! O unhappy race		
Of mortal man! doom'd to an endless round Of sorrows, and immeasurable wo!		
Second to none in fair nobility	175	
Was Philoctetes, of illustrious race;	170	
Yet here he lies, from every human aid		
Far off removed, in dreadful solitude,		
And mingles with the wild and savage herd;		
With them in famine and in misery	180	
Consumes his days, and weeps their common fa		
Unheeded, save when babbling Echo mourns,	,	
In bitterest notes, responsive to his wo.		
NEO. And yet I wonder not; for if aright		
I judge, from angry Heaven the sentence came,	184	
And Chrysa was the cruel source of all:		
KΩ		

Nor doth this sad disease inflict him still
Incurable, without assenting gods;
For so they have decreed, lest Troy should fall
Beneath his arrows, ere the appointed time
Of its destfuction come.

CHO. No more, my son! NEO. What say'st thou!

CHO. Sure I heard a dismal groun
Of some afflicted wretch!

NEO. Which way!

Cho.

Ev'n now
I hear it, and the sound as of some step
Slow moving this way: he is not far from us; 195
His plaints are louder now. Prepare, my son!

NEO. For what !

Cho. New troubles; for, behold, he comes; Not like the shepherd, with his rural pipe And cheerful song, but groaning heavily. Either his wounded foot against some thorn 900 Hath struck, and pains him sorely; or, perchance, He hath espied from far some ship attempting To enter this inhospitable port, And hence his cries to save it from destruction.

ACT II.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

PHI. Say, welcome strangers! what disastrons fate 205

Led you to this inhospitable shore,
Nor haven safe, nor habitation fit,
Affording ever! Of what clime, what race!
Who are ye! Speak; if I may trust that garb,
Familiar once to me, ye are of Greece,
My much-loved country: let me hear the sound
Offyour long-wished-for voices: do not look
With horror on me; but in kind compassion

Pity a wretch deserted and forlorn

In this sad place. O! if ye come as friends, Speak, then, and answer; hold some converse with

For this, at least, from man to man is due.

NEO. Know, stranger, first, what most thou seem'st to wish:

We are of Greece.

Рні. . O happiness to hear! After so many years of dreadful silence, 220 How welcome was that sound! O! tell me, son! What chance, what purpose, who conducted thee! What brought thee hither, what propitious gale ! Who art thou! Tell me all; inform me quickly.

NEO. Native of Scyros! thither I return: 225 My name is Neoptolemus, the son

Of brave Achilles. I have told thee all.

Phi. Dear is thy country, and thy father dear To me, thou darling of old Lycomede! But tell me, in what fleet, and whence thou comest! NEO. From Troy.

From Troy? I think thou wert not with us When first our fleet sail'd forth.

Neo. Wert thou then there ! Or know'st thou aught of that great enterprise?

PHI. Know you not, then, the man whom you behold!

NEO. How should I know whom I had never seen? Pні. Have you ne'er heard of me, nor of my name?

Hath my sad story never reach'd your ear!

Neo. Never.

PHI. Alas! how hateful to the gods.

225 Scyros was an island in the Ægean Sea, of which Lycomedes was king. Hither Achilles was brought in woman's apparel to avoid the Trojan war; and, falling in love with Deidamia, the king's daughter, had by her Pyrrhus, otherwise Neoptolemus. This explains what follows, where Philoctetes calls him "the darling of old Lycomede."

How very poor a wretch must I be, then, That Greece should never hear of woes like mine! But they who sent me hither, they conceal'd them. And smile triumphant, while my cruel wounds Grow deeper still. O, sprung from great Achilles! Behold before thee Pæan's wretched son. With whom (a chance but thou hast heard) remain The dreadful arrows of renown'd Alcides; 246 Ev'n the unhappy Philoctetes: him. Whom the Atridæ, and the vile Ulysses, Inhuman left, distemper'd as I was By the envenom'd serpent's deep-felt wound. 250 Soon as they saw that, with long toil oppress'd, Sleep had o'erta'en me on the hollow rock. There did they leave me, when from Chrysa's shore They bent their fatal course: a little food, And these few rags, were all they would bestow. 255 Such one day be their fate! Alas! my son. How dreadful, think'st thou, was that waking to me, When from my sleep I rose, and saw them not! How did I weep, and mourn my wretched state, When not a ship remain'd of all the fleet That brought me here! No kind companion left' To minister or needful food or balm To my sad wounds! On every side I look'd, And nothing saw but wo; of that, indeed. Measure too full; for day succeeded day, 265 And still no comfort came. Myself alone Could to myself the means of life afford In this poor grotto; on my bow I lived: The winged dove, which my sharp arrow slew, 270 With pain I brought into my little hut, And feasted there; then from the broken ice I slaked my thirst, or crept into the wood For useful fuel: from the stricken flint I drew the latent spark, that warms me still And still revives: this, with my humble roof, 275 Preserve me, son! but, O! my wounds remain. Thou seest an island desolate and waste:

No friendly port, nor hopes of gain to tempt, Nor host to welcome in the traveller: Few seek the wild, inhospitable shore. 280 By adverse winds, sometimes the unwilling guests (As well thou mayst suppose) were hither driven: But when they came, they only pitied me, Gave me a little food, or better garb To shield me from the cold; in vain I pray'd 285 That they would bear me to my native soil, For none would listen. Here, for ten long years, Have I remain'd, while misery and famine Keep fresh my wounds, and double my misfortune. This have the Atride and Ulysses done, And may the gods with equal woes repay them! Cно. O son of Pæan! well might those who came, And saw thee thus, in kind compassion, weep: I too must pity thee: I can no more.

Ngo. I can bear witness to thee, for I know 295 By sad experience what the Atridæ are,

And what Ulysses.

Pні. Hast thou suffer'd, then !

And dost thou hate them too?

Ngo. O! that these hands Could vindicate my wrongs! Mycenæ, then, And Sparta should confess, that Scyros boasts 300 Of sons as brave and valiant as their own.

Phi. O noble youth! but wherefore camest thou hither?

Whence this resentment?

NEO. I will tell thee all,

If I can bear to tell it: know, then, soon

As great Achilles died— Рні. —0! stay, my son! 305

Is then Achilles dead?

NEO. He is, and not

299, 300 Two cities of Peloponnesus. Neoptolemus here threatens Agamemnon and Menelaus; the former of whom was King of Mycenze, and the latter of Sparta.

By mortal hand, but by Apollo's shaft Fell glorious.

Pm. O! most worthy of each other,
The slayer and the slain! Permit me, son, 309
To mourn his fate, ere I attend to thine. [He weeps.
Nzo. Alas! thou need'st not weep for others'
woes:

Thou hast enough already of thy own.

Phi. 'Tis very true; and therefore to thy tale. NEO. Thus, then, it was. Soon as Achilles died. Phœnix. the guardian of his tender years, Instant sail'd forth, and sought me out at Scyros: With him the wary chief, Ulysses, came. They told me then (or true or false I know not), My father dead, by me, and me alone, Proud Troy must fall: I yielded to their prayers; 320 I hoped to see at least the dear remains Of him, whom living I had long in vain Wish'd to behold: safe at Sigeum's port Soon we arrived: in crowds the numerous host Throng'd to embrace me, call'd the gods to witness. In me once more they saw their loved Achilles 326 To life restored; but, he, alas! was gone. I shed the duteous tear, then sought my friends, The Atridæ (friends I thought them) claim'd the arms Of my dead father, and what else remain'd 330 His late possession; when (O cruel words! And wretched I to hear them!) thus they answer'd. "Son of Achilles! thou in vain demand'st Those arms, already to Ulysses given; The rest be thine." I wept; "And is it thus!" 335 Indignant I replied, "ye dare to give My right away."—"Know, boy!" Ulysses cried, "That right was mine, and therefore they bestow'd The boon on me; -me, who preserved the arms. And him who bore them too." With anger fired 340

340 Ulysses was reported to have taken away the dead body of Achilles from the Trojans, and carried it off the field of battle to the Grecian camp.

At this proud speech, I threaten'd all that rage Could dictate to me, if he not return'd them.

Stung with my words, yet calm, he answer'd me:

"Thou wert not with us; thou wert in a place
Where thou shouldst not have been: and since thou mean'st

345

To brave us thus, know, thou shalt never bear Those arms with thee to Scyros; 'tis resolved." Thus injured, thus deprived of all I held Most precious, by the worst of men, I left The hateful place, and seek my native soil; 350 Nor do I blame so much the proud Ulysses, As his base masters. Army, city, all Depend on those who rule: when men grow vile, The guilt is theirs who taught them to be wicked I've told thee all; and him who hates the Atridæ, 355 I hold a friend to me, and to the gods.

CHORUS .--- STROPHE.

O Earth! thou mother of great Jove, Embracing all with universal love! Author benign of every good,

Through whom Pactolus rolls his golden flood! 360

To thee, whom in thy rapid car Fierce lions draw, I rose, and made my prayer; To thee I made my sorrows known.

When from Achilles' injured son
The Atridæ gave the prize, that fatal day.

The Atridæ gave the prize, that fatal day, 365 When proud Ulysses bore his arms away.

Phr. I wonder not, my friend! to see you here, And I believe the tale; for well I know The men who wrong'd you, know the base Ulysses. Falsehood and fraud dwell on his lips, and naught 370 That's just or good can be expected from him:

360 The Earth, under the various names of Cybele, Ops, Rhea, and Vesta, called the Mother of the Gods, was worshipped in Phrygia and Libya, where the river Pactolus is said to have enriched Crossus with its sands. Cybele is represented by the poets as drawn by lions.

But strange it is to me, that, Ajax present, He dare attempt it.

Nzo. Ajax is no more; Had he been living, I had ne'er been spoil'd Thus of my right.

PHI. Is he then dead?

NEO. He is. 375
PH. Alas! the son of Tydeus, and that slave

Sold by his father Sisyphus;—they live, Unworthy as they are.

NEO. Alas! they do,

And flourish still.

Phi. My old and worthy friend,
The Pylian sage,—how is he? He could see 380
Their arts, and would have given them better counsels.

NEO. Weigh'd down with grief, he lives; but, most unhappy,

Weeps his lost son, his dear Antilochus.

Phi. O double wo! Whom I could most have wish'd

385

To live and to be happy, those to perish!

Ulysses to survive! It should not be.

NEO. O, 'tis a subtle foe! but deepest plans

May sometimes fail.

Phi. Where was Patroclus then.

Thy father's dearest friend?

NEO. He too was dead.
In war, alas! (so Fate ordains it ever,) 390
The coward 'scapes, the brave and virtuous fall.

Pm. It is too true; and now thou talk'st of cowards.

376 Diomed was the son of Tydeus.

377 It was reported that Anticlea was taken away by Lacrtes after her marriage with Sisyphus, for which the first husband received a sum of money: Ulysees, therefore, was often reproached with being the son of Sisyphus.

380 Nestor, King of Pylos.

383 Antilochus was slain by Memnon in the Trojan war.

Where is that worthless wretch, of readiest tongue, Subtle and voluble?

NEO. Ulysses?

PHI. No;

Thersites; ever talking, never heard. 395
NEO. I have not seen him, but I hear he lives.
PHI. I did not doubt it: evil never dies;
The gods take care of that: if aught there be
Fraudful and vile, 'tis safe; the good and just
Perish unpitied by them. Wherefore is it?

Perish unpitied by them. Wherefore is it?
When gods do ill, why should we worship them?

NEO. Since thus it is; since virtue is oppress'd,
And vice triumphant; who deserve to live
Are doom'd to perish, and the guilty reign;—
Henceforth, O son of Pæan! far from Troy
And the Atridæ will I live remote.
I would not see the man I cannot love.
My barren Scyros shall afford me refuge,
And home-felt joys delight my future days.
So fare thee well, and may the indulgent gods
Heal thy sad wound, and grant thee every wish
Thy soul can form! Once more, farewell. I go,
The first propitious gale.

PHI. What, now, my son?

So soon?

NEO. Immediately; the time demands
We should be near, and ready to depart.

415

We should be near, and ready to depart.

Phi. Now, by the memory of thy honour'd sire,
By thy loved mother, by whate'er remains
On earth most dear to thee, O! hear me now,
Thy suppliant: do not, do not thus forsake me,
Alone, oppress'd, deserted, as thou seest,
In this sad place. I shall (I know I must) be
A burden to thee; but, O! bear it kindly,
For ever doth the noble mind abhor
The ungenerous deed, and loves humanity.
Disgrace attends thee if thou dost forsake me;
If not, immortal Fame rewards thy goodness.
Thou mayst convey me safe to Œta's shorea
Sopn.—L

In one short day: I'll trouble you no longer. Hide me in any part where I may least Molest you. Hear me, by the guardian god Of the poor suppliant, all-protecting Jove, I beg! Behold me at thy feet: infirm. And wretched as I am, I clasp thy knees. Leave me not here, then, where there is no mark Of human footstep; take me to thy home. Or to Eubœa's port, to Œta; thence Short is the way to Trachin, or the banks Of Sperchius' gentle stream, to meet my father. If yet he lives; for, O! I begg'd him oft. By those who hither came, to fetch me hence. 440 Or he is dead, or they, neglectful, bent Their hasty course to their own native soil. Be thou my better guide; pity and save The poor and wretched. Think, my son! how frail And full of danger is the state of man, Now prosperous, now adverse: who feels no ills, Should therefore fear them; and when fortune smiles. Be doubly cautious, lest destruction come Remorseless on him, and he fall unpitied. Cно. O, pity him, my lord! for bitterest woes 450

Cho. O, pity him, my lord! for bitterest woes 450 And trials most severe he hath recounted. Far be such sad distress from those I love!
O! if thou hatest the base Atridæ, now Revenge thee on them, serve their deadliest foe; Bear the poor suppliant to his native soil;
So shalt thou bless thy friend, and 'scape the wrath Of the just gods, who still protect the wretched.

NEO. Your proffer'd kindness, friends! may cost you dear!

When you shall feel his dreadful malady Oppress you sore, you will repent it.

Cho. Never 460

Shall that reproach be ours.

436 Eubosa was a large island in the Ægean sea, now called Negropont. Œta, a mountain in Thessaly, now called Bunins.

NEO. In generous pity f the afflicted thus to be o'ercome ere most disgraceful to me : he shall go. ay the kind gods speed our departure hence, nd guide our vessels to the wish'd-for shore! 465 Phi. O happy hour! O kindest, best of men! nd you, my dearest friends! how shall I thank you! hat shall I do to show my grateful heart! e us be gone; but, O! permit me first o take my last farewell of my poor hut. 470 here I so long have lived. Perhaps you'll say, must have had a noble mind to bear it. he very sight, to any eyes but mine, ere horrible; but sad necessity t length prevail'd, and made it pleasing to me. 475 Сно. One from our ship, my lord! and with him comes

stranger. Stop a moment, till we hear heir business with us.

nter a SPY, in the habit of a merchant, with another Grecian.

SPY. Son of great Achilles! now, chance alone hath brought me hither, driven y adverse winds to where thy vessels lay s home I sail'd from Troy; there did I meet his my companion, who inform'd me where hou mightst be found: hence to pursue my course, nd not to tell thee what concerns thee near, ad been ungenerous; thou perhaps meantime, 485 f Greece and of her counsels naught suspecting; ounsels against thee, not by threats alone, r words enforced, but now in execution. NEO. Now by my virtue, stranger! for thy news am much bound to thee, and will repay hy service. Tell me what the Greeks have done. Spy. A fleet already sails to fetch thee back. onducted by old Phænix, and the sons f valiant Theseus.

NEO.

SPY.

But speak, I charge thee.

NBO. Come they then to force me! Or am I to be won by their persuasion! Spy. I know not that; you have what I could learn. Nzo. And did the Atridæ send them ? Sent they are. And will be with you soon. NEO. But wherefore, then. Came not Ulysses! Did his courage fail! SPY. He, ere I left the camp, with Diomed 500 On some important embassy sail'd forth, In search— NEO. Of whom ! SPV. There was a man—but stay. Who is thy friend here! Tell me, but speak softly. whispering him. NEO. The famous Philoctetes. Ha! begone then; Ask me no more ; away immediately. Phi. What do these dark, mysterious whispers mean ! Concern they me, my son? NEo. I know not what He means to say; but I would have him speak Boldly before us all, what'er it be. Spy. Do not betray me to the Grecian host. 510 Nor make me speak what I would fain conceal: I am but poor; they have befriended me. NEO. In me thou seest an enemy confess'd To the Atridæ: this is my best friend. Because he hates them too: if thou art mine, 515 Hide nothing then. SPY. Consider first. NEO. I have. Spy. The blame will be on you.

494 Acamas and Demophoon,

Why let it be:

Since I must, then; know,

In solemn league combined, the bold Ulysses. And gallant Diomed, have sworn, by force 520 Or by persuasion, to bring back thy friend: The Grecians heard Laertes' son declare His purpose : far more resolute he seem'd Than Diomed, and surer of success.

NEO. But why the Atridæ, after so long a time, 525 Again should wish to see this wretched exile:— Whence this desire? came it from the angry god

To punish thus their inhumanity!

SPY. I can inform you; for perhaps from Greece Of late you have not heard. There was a prophet, Son of old Priam, Helenus by name; 531 Him, in his midnight walks, the wily chief, Ulvsses, curse of every tongue, espied; Took him, and led him captive, to the Greeks A welcome spoil. Much he foretold to all, 535 And added last, that Troy should never fall, Till Philoctetes from this isle return'd. Ulvsses heard, and instant promise gave To fetch him hence; he hoped by gentle means To gain him: those successless, force at last Could but compel him: he would go, he cried, And if he fail'd, his head should pay the forfeit. I've told thee all, and warn thee to be gone. Thou and thy friend, if thou wouldst wish to save

Phi. And does the traitor think he can persuade me 1 545

As well might he persuade me to return From death to life, as his base father did.

547 Sisyphus, imagined by many to be the father of Ulyases: concerning whom a superstitious report prevailed, that, having on his death-bed desired his wife not to bury him, on his arrival in the infernal regions, he complained to Pluto of her cruelty in not performing the funeral obsequies, and was by him permitted, on promise of immediate return, to revisit this world, in order to punish her for the neglect; but when he came to earth, being unwilling to go back to Tartarus, he was compelled by Mercury.

 L_2

SPY. Of that I know not: I must to my ship. Farewell; and may the gods protect you both! Exit.

Pm. Lead me, expose me to the Grecian host! And could the insolent Ulysses hope 551 -With his soft flatteries e'er to conquer me? No: sooner would I listen to the voice Of that fell serpent, whose envenom'd tongue Hath lamed me thus. But what is there he dare not Or say or do? I know he will be here Ev'n now, depend on't: therefore, let's away: Quick let the sea divide us from Ulysses: Let us be gone; for well-timed expedition (The task perform'd) brings safety and repose. 560 NEO. Soon as the wind permits us, we embark. But now 'tis adverse.

Every wind is fair. When we are flying from misfortune.

NEO.

True;

And 'tis against them too.

Alas! no storms Can drive back fraud and rapine from their prev. 565 Ngo. I'm ready; take what may be necessary, And follow me.

Рні.

I want not much. NEO. Perhape

My ship will furnish you.

Рні. There is a plant Which to my wound gives some relief: I must Have that.

NEO. Is there aught else!

Ри. Alas! my bow 570 I had forgot; I must not lose that treasure.

[Philoctetes steps towards his grotto, and brings out his bow and arrows.]

NEO. Are these the famous arrows, then ! Рні. They are.

NEO. And may I be permitted to behold, To touch, to pay my adoration to them!

Pm. In these, my son! in every thing that's mine. Thou hast a right. Neo. But if it be a crime. 576 I would not; otherwise— O! thou art full Of piety: in thee it is no crime: In thee, my friend! by whom alone I look Once more with pleasure on the radiant sun; 580 By whom I live; who givest me to return To my dear father, to my friends, my country. Sunk as I was beneath my foes, once more I rise to triumph o'er them, by thy aid. Behold them, touch them, but return them to me, And boast that virtue which on thee alone Bestow'd such honour, virtue made them mine. I can deny thee nothing: he, whose heart Is grateful, can alone deserve the name 590 Of friend, to every treasure far superior.

NEO. Go in.

Phi. Come with me; for my painful wound

Requires thy friendly hand to help me onward.

[Excunt.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Since proud Ixion (doom'd to feel
The tortures of the eternal wheel,
Bound by the hand of angry Jove)
Received the due rewards of impious love;
Ne'er was distress so deep, nor wo so great,
As on the wretched Philoctetes wait;
Who, ever with the just and good,
Guiltless of fraud and rapine stood.
And the fair paths of virtue still pursued.
Alone on this inhospitable shore,
Where waves for ever beat and tempests roar,
How could he e'er or hope or comfort know, 604
Or painful life support, beneath such weight of wo the story of the support of

ANTISTROPHE I.

Exposed to the inclement skies, Deserted and forlorn he

No friend or fellow-mourner there.

To soothe his sorrows, and divide his care: Or seek the healing plant, of power to 'suage 610

His aching wound, and mitigate its rage:

But if, perchance, awhile released

From torturing pain, he sinks to rest,

Awaken'd soon, and by sharp hunger pressed. Compell'd to wander forth in search of food, 615

He crawls in anguish to the neighbouring wood:

Ev'n as the tottering infant in despair,

Who mourns an absent mother's kind, supporting care.

STROPHE II.

The teeming Earth, which mortals still supplies With every good, to him her seed denies; A stranger to the joy that flows

From the kind aid which man on man bestows:

Nor food, alas! to him was given,

Save when his arrows pierced the birds of heaven; Nor e'er did Bacchus' heart-expanding bowl, 625

For ten long years relieve his cheerless soul: But glad was he his eager thirst to slake

In the unwholesome pool, or ever-stagnant lake.

ANTISTROPHE II.

But now, behold the joyful captive freed:

630 A fairer fate and brighter days succeed;

For he at last hath found a friend Of noblest race, to save and to defend;

To guide him with protecting hand,

And safe restore him to his native land :

On Sperchius' flowery banks to join the throng

Of Melian nymphs, and lead the choral song 636 On Œta's top, which saw Alcides rise,

And from the flaming pile ascend his native skies.

635 Sperchius was a river in Thessaly.

636 Melos was an island near Candia, reckoned among the Cyclades, and now called Milo.

ACT III.

NEOPTOLEMUS. PHILOCTETES. CHORUS. NEO. COME, Philoctetes! why thus silent? Where-This sudden terror on thee ! Pm. Whence is it! 640 NEO. PHI. Nothing; my son! go on. NEO. **h** it thy wound That pains thee thus ! Pm. No; I am better now: O! gods! Why dost thou call thus on the gods? Ngo. Pril To smile propitious, and preserve us—0! NEO. Thou art in misery. Tell me: wilt thou not? 645 What is it? PHI. O, my son! I can no longer Conceal it from thee. O! I die, I perish! By the great gods let me implore thee, now, This moment, if thou hast a sword, O! strike; Cut off this painful limb, and end my being. NEO. What can this mean, that unexpected thus It should torment thee ? Know you not, my son! NEO. What is the cause? PHI. Can you not guess it? NEO. No. PHI. NOT I. NEO. That's stranger still. Pri. My son, my son! NEO. This new attack is terrible indeed! Pm. 'Tis inexpressible: have pity on me. Nzo. What shall I do? Do not be terrified. And leave me: its returns are regular.

And, like the traveller, when its appetite Is satisfied, it will depart. O! O!

660 side

NEO. Thou art oppress'd with ills on every side.

Give me thy hand: come, wilt thou lean upon me?

PER. No; but these arrows, take, preserve them
for me

A little while, till I grow better: sleep
Is coming on me, and my pains will cease.
Let me be quiet: if, meantime, our foes
Surprise thee, let nor force nor artifice
Deprive thee of the great, the precious trust
I have reposed in thee: that were ruin
To thee and to thy friend.

Nzo. Be not afraid; 670 No hands but mine shall touch them: give them to

Phi. Receive them, son! and let it be thy prayer. They bring not woes on thee, as they have done
To me, and to Alcides. [Gives him the bow and
arrows.

Nso. May the gods
Forbid it ever! may they guide our course, 675
And speed our prosperous sails!

PHI.

Alas! my son!

I fear thy vows are vain; behold, my blood

Flows from the wound: O, how it pains me! now

It comes, it hastens: do not, do not leave me;

O, that Ulysses felt this racking torture,

Ev'n to his inmost soul! Again it comes.

O Agamemnon! Menelaus! why

Should not you bear these pangs as I have done!

O Death! where art thou, Death! so often call'd,

Wilt thou not listen! wilt thou never come!

685

Take thou the Lemnian fire, my generous friend!

Do me the same kind office which I did

686 Alluding, most probably, to the generally received opinion that the forges of Vulcan were in the island of Lemnos.

687 Philoctetes had attended his friend Hercules in his last moments, and set fire to the funeral pile, when he expired on the top of Mount Œta.

For my Alcides; these are thy reward. He gave them to me; thou alone deserv'st The great inheritance. What says my friend? 690 What says my dear preserver ? O! where art thou? NEO. I mourn thy hapless fate. Pm. Be of good cheer: Quick my disorder comes, and goes as soon. **Monly** beg thee not to leave me here. NEO. Depend on't, I will stay. Wilt thou, indeed \$695 Nzo, Trust me, I will. Pm. I need not bind thee to it By oath. NEO. O no; 'twere impious to forsake thee. Pm. Give me thy hand, and pledge thy faith. Pm. Thither, O! thither lead. [Pointing up to heaven. NEO. What say'st thou! where! Pні. Above. NEO. What, lost again! why look'st thou thus 700 On that bright circle? Pm. Let me, let me go. NEO. [lays hold of him.] Where wouldst thou go ! PHL. Loose me. NEO. I will not. Prn. 01 You'll kill me if you do not. NEO. [lets him go.] There, then; now Is thy mind better? O! receive me, earth; PHI. 705 Receive a dying man: here must I lie; For O! my pain's so great, I cannot rise. [Philoctetes sinks down on the earth near the entrance of the cove.

NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

NEO. Sleep hath o'erta'en him: see, his head is laid On the cold earth; the balmy sweat thick drops From every limb, and from the broken vein • 70%. Flows the warm blood; let us indulge his slumbers.

INVOCATION TO SLEEP.

715

Cmo. Sleep, thou patron of mankind!
Great Physician of the mind!
Who dost nor pain nor sorrow know;
Sweetest balm of every wo;
Mildest sovereign! hear us now;
Hear thy wretched suppliant's vow:
His eyes in gentle slumbers close,

And continue his repose.

Hear thy wretched suppliants vow: Great physician! hear us now.

And now, my son! what best may suit thy purpose Consider well, and how we are to act.

What more can we expect? The time is come;
For better far is opportunity

Seized at the lucky hour, than all the counsels 729. Which wisdom dictates, or which craft inspires.

Nzo. He hears us not: but easy as it is
To gain the prize, it would avail us nothing
Were he not with us. Phœbus hath reserved
For him alone the crown of victory:
But thus to boast of what we could not do,
And break our word, were most disgraceful to us.

Cho. The gods will guide us, fear it not, my son!
But what thou say'st, speak soft, for well thou
know'st

The sick man's sleep is short: he may awake 735 And hear us; therefore let us hide our purpose. If then thou think'st as he does,—thou know'st

whom,
This is the hour: at such a time, my son!
The wisest err; but mark me, the wind's fair,
And Philoctetes sleeps, void of all help.
Lame, impotent, unable to resist,
He is as one among the dead; ev'n now

737 The Chorus here means Ulysses.

We'll take him with us; 'twere an easy task

Leave it to me, my son: there is no danger.

NEO. No more; his eyes are open: see, he
moves.

745

PHILOUPETES, REOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

PHI. [Awaking.] O fair returning light, beyond my hopes!

You too, my kind preservers! O my son!
I could not think you would have stay'd so long
In kind compassion to thy friend. Alas!
The Atridæ never would have acted thus: 750
But noble is thy nature, and thy birth;
And therefore little did my wretchedness,
Nor from my wounds the noisome stench deter
Thy generous heart. I have a little respite.
Help me, my son! I'll try to rise; this weakness 755
Will leave me soon, and then we'll go together.

NEO. I little thought to find thee thus restored.

Trust me, I joy to see thee free from pain,

And hear thee speak; the marks of death were on thee.

Raise thyself up; thy friends, here, if thou wilt, Shall carry thee, 'twill be no burden to them, 761 If we request it.

Par. No; thy hand alone.

I will not trouble them; 'twill be enough

If they can bear with me and my distemper,

When we embark.

Ngo. Well, be it so; but rise. 765
[Philoctetes rises.

Phi. O never fear; I'll rise as well as ever.

[Essunt.

ACT IV.

REOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCYTETES, CHORUS.

NEO. How shall I act?
PERI.

SOPE.—M

What says my son?

Neo.	Alas
I know not what to say; n	ny doubtful mind—
Pm. Talk'd you of doubt	s! You did not, surely
NEO.	Āy
That's my misfortune.	•
Pm. Is	then my distress 776
The cause at last you will	not take me with you?
NEO. All is distress and	misery, when we act
Against our nature, and co	nsent to ill.
PHI. But, sure, to help a	good man in misfortune
Is not against thy nature.	3
NEO.	Men will call me 77
A villain; that distracts me	
Ры.	Not for this,
For what thou mean'st to d	
NEO. What shall I do?	Direct me, Jove! To
hide	2.1.000 110, 0000 1
What I should speak, and	tell a hase untruth
Were double guilt.	Total a basic unit using
	rposes at last. 780
I fear it much, to leave me	
NEO.	Leave thee! No.
But how to make thee go	
There I'm distress'd.	with pleasure nence,
	inderstand thee not;
What means my son?	uideistand thee not;
	oon no longer hide
	can no longer hide
The dreadful secret from the	nee: thou art going 783
To Troy, ev'n to the Greek	
Pm. Alas! what say'st t	
NEO. D	o not weep, but hear me
PHI. What must I hea	L: ANUST MITE'RHOR OF
	a Aban samu Abas sa
NEO. First, set thee fre	e; then carry thee, my
friend,	-
To conquer Troy.	in 3 3 Alan
	indeed thy purpose ? 790
NEO. This am I bound to	
Ри.	Then am I lost,

810

820

Undone, betray'd. Canst thou, my friend! do this! Give me my arms again.

NEO. It cannot be:

I must obey the powers who sent me hither:

Justice enjoins: the common cause demand 795

PH. Thou worst of men! thou vile artificer
Of fraud most infamous! what hast thou done?
How have I been deceived? Dost thou not blush
To look on me, to behold me thus
Beneath thy feet imploring? Base betrayer!
To rob me of my bow, the means of life,

The only means; give them, restore them to me; Do not take all. Alas! he hears me not, Nor deigns to speak; but casts an angry look, That says, I never shall be free again.

That says, I never shall be free again. 805 O mountains, rivers, rocks, and savage herds! To you I speak; to you alone I now

Must breathe my sorrows; you are wont to hear My sad complaints, and I will tell you all

That I have suffer'd from Achilles' son; Who, bound by solemn oath to bear me hence To my dear native soil, now sails for Trov.

The perjured wretch first gave his plighted hand,
Then stole the sacred arrows of my friend,
The son of Jove, the great Alcides: those

The son of Jove, the great Alcides: those
He means to show the Greeks, to snatch me hence,
And boast his prize; as if poor Philoctetes,
This empty shade, were worthy of his arm.

Had I been what I was, he ne'er had thus Subdued me, and ev'n now to fraud alone He owes the conquest: I have been betray'd.

Give ms my arms again, and be thyself
Once more O's speak: thou wilt not: then

Once more. O! speak: thou wilt not; then I'm lost.

O my poor hut! again I come to thee,
Naked and destitute of food: once more
Receive me, here to die; for now, no longer
Shall my swift arrow reach the flying prey,
Or on the mountains pierce the wandering herd;

I shall myself afford a banquet now
To those I used to feed on; they the hunters,
And I their easy prey: so shall the blood,
Which I so oft have ahed, be paid by mine;
And all this too from him whom onea I destrict
Stranger to fraud, nor capable of ill.
And yet I will not curse thee, till I know
Whether thou still retain'st thy horrid purpose,
Or dost repent thee of it; if thou dost not,
Destruction wait thee!

CHO. We attend your pleasure.
My royal lord! we must be gone; determine

To leave, or take him with us.

Nzo. His distress 840
Doth move me much: trust me, I long have felt.
Compassion for him.

PHI. O! then by the gods '
Pity me now, my son! nor let mankind
Reproach thee for a fraud so base.

NEO. Alas!
What shall I do! Would I were still at Scyros!
For I am most unhappy.

Pm. O my son! 846
Thou art not base by nature, but misguided,
By those who are, to deeds unworthy of thee:
Turn then thy fraud on them who best deserve it,
Restore my arms, and leave me.

Ngo. Speak, my friends! 850

What's to be done?

Enter ULYSCES.

ULVS. Ha! dost thou heatates.
Traitor! be gone! give me the arms.
Pht. Ah me!
Ulvsses here!

ULYS. Ay, 'tis Ulysses' self . That stands before thee.

Phr. Then I'm lost—betray'd: This was the cruel spoiler.

Manacled! O hande. W 3

Against this rock, and sprinkle it with my blood. ULYS. [to the Chorus.] Seize and prevent him.

They seize him.

Urvs.

ULYS.

ULYS.

Риі.

ULYS.

ULYS.

Рні.

ULYS.

PHI.

brains

How helpless are you now! Those arms which once 879 Protected, thus torn from you! Thou abandoned. to Ulysses. Thou shameless wretch! from whom nor truth nor justice. Naught that becomes the generous mind, can flow, How hast thou us'd me! how betray'd! Suborn'd This stranger, this poor youth, who, worthier far To be my friend than thine, was only here Thy instrument: he knew not what he did, And now, thou seest, repents him of the crime Which brought such guilt on him, such woes on me. But thy foul soul, which from its dark recess Trembling looks forth, beheld him void of art, Unwilling as he was, instructed him, And made him soon a master in deceit. I am thy prisoner now; ev'n now thou mean'st To drag me hence, from this unhappy shore. Where first thy malice left me, a poor exile, 895 Deserted, friendless, and, though living, dead To all mankind. Perish the vile betraver! O! I have cursed thee often, but the gods Will never hear the prayers of Philoctetes. Life and its joys are thine: while I, unhappy, 900 Am but the scorn of thee and the Atridæ, Thy haughty masters: fraud and force compell'd

Or thou hadst never sail'd with them to Troy. I lent my willing aid; with seven brave ships I plough'd the main to serve them; in return, 905 They cast me forth, disgraced me, left me here. Thou say'st they did it; they impute the crime To thee; and what will you do with me now! And whither must I go? What end, what purpose,

⁹⁰² Ulysses, unwilling to go among the other chiefs to the siege of Troy, feigned himself mad; but being detected by Palamedes, was after all obliged to join them.

Could urge thee to it? I am nothing, lost 910 And dead already: wherefore, tell me, wherefore Am I not still the same detested burden. Loathsome and lame? Again must Philoctetes Disturb your holy rites! If I am with you, How can you make libations! That was once 915 Your vile pretence for inhumanity. O, may you perish for the deed! The gods Will grant it, sure, if justice be their care; And that it is I know. You had not left Your native soil, to seek a wretch like me, Had not some impulse from the powers above, Spite of yourselves, ordain'd it! O my country! And you, O gods! who look upon this deed. Punish, in pity to me, punish all The guilty band! Could I behold them perish. 925 My wounds were nothing; that would heal them all. CHO. [to Ulysses.] Observe, my lord, what bitterness of soul

His words express! he bends not to misfortune, But seems to brave it.

ULYS.

I could answer him,
Were this a time for words; but now, no more 930
Than this,—I act as best befits our purpose.
Where virtue, truth, and justice are required,
Ulysses yields to none; I was not born
To be o'ercome, and yet submit to thee.
Let him remain. Thy arrows shall suffice;
We want thee not: Teucer can draw thy bow
As well as thou; myself, with equal strength,
Can aim the deadly shaft, with equal skill.
What could thy presence do? Let Lemnos keep
thee.

Farewell! perhaps the honours once design'd 940
For thee may be reserved to grace Ulysses.
Phy. Alas! shall Greece then see my deadliest

Pm. Alas! shall Greece then see my deadliest

Adorn'd with arms which I alone should bear?
ULYS, No more: I must be gone.

PHI. [to Neoptolemus.] Son of Achilles! Thou wilt not leave me too! I wast not lose 945 Thy converse, thy assistance.

ULYS. [to Neoptolemus.] Look not on him: Away, I charge thee; 'twould be fatal to us.

Phi. [to the Chorus.] Will you forsake me, friends!

Dwells no compassion Within your breasts for me!

Cho. [pointing to Neoptolemus.] He is our master; We speak and act but as his will directs. 950

Nzo. I know he will upbraid me for this weakness; But 'tis my nature and I must consent,
Since Philoctetes asks it: stay you with him,
Till to the gods our pious prayers we offer,
And all things are prepared for our departure; 955
Perhaps, meantime, to better thoughts his mind
May turn relenting. We must go: remember,
When we shall call you, follow instantly.

Phi. O my poor hut! and is it then decreed
Again I come to thee to part no more,
To end my wretched days in this sad cave,
The scene of all my woes! For whither now
Can I betake me! Who will feed, support,
Or cherish Philoctetes! Not a hope
964
Remains for me. O, that the impetuous storms
Would bear me with them to some distant clime!
For I must perish here.

CHO. Unhappy man!
Thou hast provoked thy fate; thyself alone
Art to thyself a foe, to scorn the good
Which wisdom bids thee take, and choose misfortune. 970

PHI. Wretch that I am, to perish here alone!
O! I shall see the face of man no more,
Nor shall my arrows pierce their winged prey,
And bring me sustenance! Such vile delusions
Used to betray me! O that pains like those
975
I feel might reach the author of my woes!

Cno. The gods decreed it; we are not to blame: Heap not thy curses, therefore, on the guiltless,

But take our friendship.

PHI. [pointing to the sea-shore.] I behold him there:
Ev'n now I see him laughing me to scorn, 980
On yonder shore, and in his hands the darts
He waves triumphant, which no arms but these
Had ever borne. O, my dear, glorious treasure!
Hadst thou a mind to feel the indignity,
How wouldst thou grieve to change thy noble master, 985

The friend of great Alcides, for a wretch So vile, so base, so impious as Ulysses!

Cho. Justice will ever rule the good man's tongue,
Nor from his lips reproach and bitterness
Invidious flow. Ulysses, by the voice 990
Of Greece appointed, only sought a friend
To join the common cause, and serve his country:

Pm. Hear me, ye wing'd inhabitants of air?
And you who on these mountains love to feed,
My savage prey, whom once I could pursue;
Fearful no more of Philoctetes, fly
This hollow rock; I cannot hurt you now.
You need not dread to enter here: alas!
You now may come, and in your turn regale
On these poor limbs, when I shall be no more. 1000
Where can I hope for food? or who can breathe
This vital air, when life-preserving earth
No longer will assist him?

Cho. By the gods
Let me entreat thee, if thou dost regard
Our master and thy friend, come to him now, 1005
While thou mayst 'scape this sad calamity.
Who but thyself would choose to be unhappy,
That could prevent it!

Phi. O! you have brought back Once more the sad remembrance of my griefs. Why, why, my friends, would you afflict me than! Cho. Afflict thee, how!

```
. Think you I'll e'er return 1011
To hateful Troy!
                   We would advise thee to it.
  Сно.
  Phi. I'll hear no more. Go, leave me.
                                     That we shall
  CHO.
Most gladly: to the ships, my friends! away.
Obey your orders.
                                            going.
  PHI. [stops them.] By protecting Jove,
                                              1015
Who hears the suppliant's prayer, do not forsake me.
  Сно. [returning.] Be calm then.
  PHI.
               O, my friends! will you then stay?
Do, by the gods I beg you.
                            Why that groan?
  Сно.
  Phl. Alas! I die! My wound, my wound! Here
      after
                                             1019
What can I do! You will not leave me: hear—
  CHO. What canst thou say we do not know al-
      ready?
  Pm. O'erwhelm'd by such a storm of griefs as I
You should not thus resent a madman's phrensy.
  CHO. Comply, then, and be happy.
                                     Never, never,
(Be sure of that) though thunder-bearing Jove 1025
Should with his lightnings blast me, would I go.
No; let Troy perish, perish all the host
Who sent me here to die; but, O my friends!
Grant me this last request.
                         What is it. Speak. 1029
  Pm. A sword, a dart, some instrument of death.
  Сно. What wouldst thou do?
                           I'd hack off every limb.
Death! my soul longs for death.
                              But wherefore is it?
  Pm. I'll seek my father.
  Сно.
                            Whither?
  Рш.
                                      In the tomb:
There he must be. O Scyros! O my country!
How could I bear to see thee as I am ?
```

I, who had left thy sacred shores, to aid The hateful sons of Greece! O misery!

> Goes into the cave. Exeunt.

ACT V.

ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

Cho. Ere now we should have ta'en thee to our ships.

But that advancing this way I behold

Ulysses, and with him Achilles' son. Ulvs. Why this return! Wherefore this haste! NEO. I come

To purge me of my crimes.

ULYS. Indeed! what crimes? NEO. My blind obedience to the Grecian host.

And to thy counsels.

Hast thou practised aught ULYS.

Base, or unworthy of thee ?

NEO. Yes, by art 1045

And vile deceit betray'd the unhappy.

ULYS. Whom! Alas! what mean you?

NEO.

Nothing: but the som Of Pæan-

Ulys.

Ha! what wouldst thou do? My heart Misgives me. [aside.]

I have ta'en his arms, and now-NEO. ULYS. Thou wouldst restore them! Speak! is that thy purpose?

Almighty Jove!

NEO. Unjustly should I keep

Another's right?

ULYS. Now by the gods, thou mean'st

To mock me; dost thou not? If to speak truth NEO.

Be mockery.

ULYS. And does Achilles' son Say this to me?		
NEO. Why force me to repeat 1055		
My words so often to thee? ULYS. Once to hear them,		
Is once indeed too much.		
NEO. Doubt them no more,		
For I have told thee all. ULYS. There are, remember.—		
There are who may prevent thee.		
NEO. Who shall dare To thwart my purpose?		
ULYS. All the Grecian host, 1060		
And with them I. Nzo. Wise as thou art, Ulysses!		
Thou talk'st most idly.		
ULYS. Wisdom is not thine,		
Either in word or deed. Nzo. Know, to be just		
Is better far than to be wise.		
Ulys. But where, Where is the justice, thus unauthorized, 1065		
To give a treasure back thou ow'st to me,		
And to my counsels? NEO. I have done a wrong,		
And I will try to make atonement for it.		
ULYS. Dost thou not fear the power of Greece? NEO. I fear		
Nor Greece nor thee when I am doing right. 1070		
ULVS. 'Tis not with Troy, then, we contend, but thee.		
NEO. I know not that.		
ULYS. Seest thou this hand? Behold, It grasps my sword.		
Nzo. Mine is alike prepared,		
Nor seeks delay. ULYs. But I will let thee go: 1074		
Ults. But I will let thee go; 1074 Greece shall know all thy guilt, and shall revenge it.		
[Exit Ulysses.		

Ngo. 'Twas well determined: always be as wise As now thou art, and thou mayst live in safety. Approaching towards the cave. Ho! son of Pæan! Philoctetes! leave Thy rocky habitation, and come forth. 1079 PHI. [from the cave.] What noise was that! Who calls on Philoctetes? [He comes out. Alas! what would you, strangers! are you come To heap fresh miseries on me? Be of comfort. NEO. And hear the tidings which I bring. I dare not: Thy flattering tongue already hath betray'd me. 1084 NEO. And is there, then, no room for penitence? Phi. Such were thy words, when, seemingly, sincere. Yet meaning ill, thou stolest my arms awav. Nro. But now it is not so. I only came To know if thou are resolute to stay, Or sail with us. No more of that; 'tis vain 1090 Рні. And useless all. NEO. Art thou then fix'd? I am? It is impossible to say how firmly. NEO. I thought I could have moved thee, but I've done. Phi. 'Tis well thou hast; thy labour had been vain: For never could my soul esteem the man Who robb'd me of my dearest, best possession. And now would have me listen to his counsels. Unworthy offspring of the best of men! Perish the Atridæ! perish first Ulysses! 1100 Perish thyself! Withhold thy imprecations, And take thy arrows back. ▲ second time PHI.

Wouldst thou deceive me!

SOPH.-N

By the Almighty pewer NEO. Of sacred Jove, I swear. O joyful sound If thou sav'st truly. Let my actions speak: Stretch forth thy hand, and take thy arms again. Gives him the arrows. Enter ULVSSES. ULYS. Witness, ye gods! here, in the name of Greece And the Atridæ, I forbid it! Pm. Ha! What voice is that? Ulysses? Ulvs. Av, tis I . I. who perforce will carry thee to Troy Spite of Achilles' son. Pm. [raising his arm as intending to throw an arrow at Ulysses.] Not if I aim 1110 This shaft aright. NEO. [laying hold of him.] Now, by the gods, I beg thee. Stop thy rash hand. Рні. Let go my arm. NEO. I will not. Pm. Shall I not slay my enemy? O no; 'Twould cast dishonour on us both. Thou know'st These Grecian chiefs are loud pretending boasters. Brave but in tongue, and cowards in the field. 1116 NEO. I know it; but remember, I restored Thy arrows to thee, and thou hast no cause For rage, or for complaint against thy friend. Pm. I own thy goodness: thou hast shown thyself Worthy thy birth; no son of Sisyphus, 1121 But of Achilles, who on earth preserved A fame unspotted, and among the dead

Still shines superior, an illustrious shade.

NEO. Joyful I thank thee for a father's praise, 1125

And for my own; but listen to my words, And mark me well. Misfortunes, which the gods Inflict on mortals, they perforce must bear; But when, oppress'd by voluntary woes, They make themselves unhappy, they deserve not Our pity or our pardon; such art thou. 1131 Thy savage soul, impatient of advice, Rejects the wholesome counsel of thy friend, And treats him like a foe : but I will speak, Jove be my witness! therefore hear my words, 1135 And grave them in thy heart. The dire disease Thou long hast suffer'd is from angry Heaven, Which thus afflicts thee for thy rash approach To the fell serpent, which on Chrysa's shore Watch'd o'er the sacred treasures; know, beside, That while the sun in yonder east shall rise, Or in the west decline, distemper'd still Thou ever shalt remain, unless to Troy Thy willing mind transport thee: there the sons Of Esculapius shall restore thee; there, 1145 By my assistance, shalt thou conquer Troy: I know it well: for that prophetic sage, The Trojan captive Helenus, foretold It should be so; "proud Troy," he added then, "This very year must fall; if not, my life Shall answer for the falsehood;" therefore yield; Thus to be deem'd the first of Grecians; thus By Pæan's favorite sons to be restored, And thus mark'd out the conqueror of Troy, Is sure distinguish'd happiness.

PHI. O life 1155
Detested! why wilt thou still keep me here?
Why not dismiss me to the tomb? Alas!
What can I do? How can I disbelieve
My generous friend? I must consent, and yet
Can I do this, and look upon the sun? 1160
Can I behold my friends? Will they forgive,
Will they associate with me after this?
And you, ye heavenly orbs, that roll around me!

How will you bear to see me link'd with those
Who have destroy'd me; ev'n the sons of Atreus,
Ev'n with Ulysses, source of all my woes! 1166
My sufferings past I could forget; but, O!
I dread the woes to come; for well I know,
When once the mind's corrupted, it brings forth
Unnumber'd crimes, and ills to ills succeed. 1170
It moves my wonder much, that thou, my friend,
Shouldst thus advise me, whom it ill becomes
To think of Troy: I rather had believed
Thou wouldst have sent me far, far off from those
Who have defrauded thee of thy just right, 1175
And gave thy arms away. Are these the men
Whom thou wouldst serve,—whom thou wouldst

thus compel me
To save and to defend? It must not be.
Remember, O my son! the solemn oath
Thou gav'st to bear me to my native soil.

Do this, my friend! remain thyself at Scyros,
And leave these wretches to be wretched still.
Thus shalt thou merit double thanks, from me
And from my father; nor by succour given
To vile betrayers prove thyself as vile.

1185
NEO. Thou sav'st most truly: vet confide in Hea-

NEO. Thou say'st most truly; yet confide in Heaven.

Trust to thy friends, and leave this hated place.

Phi. Leave it? For whom? For Troy and the

Atridæ?

These wounds forbid it.

Ngo. They shall all be heal'd, Where I will carry thee.

Рні. An idle tale

Thou tell'st me, surely, dost thou not!
NEO.

I speak

1190

What best may serve us both.

Pur.
But, speaking thus,

Dost thou not fear the offended gods!

NEO.

Why fear them!

Can I offend the gods by doing good !

Pm. What good? To whom? To me, or to the Atridæ ? NEO. I am thy friend, and therefore would persuade thee. Pm. And therefore give me to my foes. NEO. Alas! Let not misfortunes thus transport thy soul To rage and bitterness. Thou wouldst destroy me. NEO. Thou know'st me not. I know the Atridæ well, 1200 Who left me here. NEO. They did; yet they, perhaps. Ev'n they, O Philoctetes! may preserve thee. Phi. I never will to Trov. What's to be done? NEO. Since I can ne'er persuade thee, I submit: Live on in misery. Then let me suffer: Pm. 1205 Suffer I must; but, O! perform thy promise; Think on thy plighted faith, and guard me home Instant, my friend; nor ever call back Troy To my remembrance. I have felt enough From Troy already. NEO. Let us go; prepare. 1210 Phi. O glorious sound! Bear thyself up. NEO. I will. Ри. If possible. NEO. But how shall I escape The wrath of Greece? O! think not of it. Pm. What If they should waste my kingdom? Pm. I'll be there.— NEO. Alas! what canst thou do? Pн. And with these arrows 1215 Of my Alcides-NEO. Ha! what say'st thou? N 2

Pm. Drive
Thy foes before me; not a Greek shall dare
Approach thy borders.
NEO. If thou wilt do this,

NEO. If thou wilt do this, Salute the earth, and instant hence. Away!

Hercules descends and speaks.

Stay, son of Pæan! Lo! to thee 'tis given 1220 Once more to see and hear thy loved Alcides. Who for thy sake hath left you heavenly mansions, And comes to tell thee the decrees of Jove; To turn thee from the paths thou mean'st to tread, And guide thy footsteps right: therefore attend. 1225 Thou know'st what toils, what labours I endured. Ere I by virtue gain'd immortal fame: Thou too, like me, by toils must rise to glory; Thou too must suffer ere thou canst be happy. 1229 Hence with thy friend to Troy, where honour calls, Where health awaits thee; where, by virtue raised To highest rank, and leader of the war, Paris, its hateful author, shalt thou slay, Lay waste proud Troy, and send thy trophies home, Thy valour's due reward, to glad thy sire. 1235 On Œta's top, the gifts which Greece bestows Must thou reserve to grace my funeral pile, And be a monument to after ages Of these all-conquering arms. Son of Achilles [turning to Neoptolemus.

[turning to Neoptolemus.

(For now to thee I speak) remember this; 1240

Without his aid thou canst not conquer Troy,

Nor Philoctetes without thee succeed.

Go, then; and, like two lions in the field

Roaming for prey, guard you each other well:

My Esculapius will I send ev'n now 1245

To heal thy wounds; then go, and conquer Troy.

But when you lay the vanquished city waste,

Be careful that you venerate the gods;

For far above all other gifts, doth Jove,

The almighty Father, hold true piety. 1250

1255

Whether we live or die, that still survives Beyond the reach of fate, and is immortal.

NEO. Once more to let me hear that wished-for voice,

To see thee after so long a time, was bliss I could not hope for. O! I will obey Thy great commands most willingly. Pm.

And I.

HER. Delay not, then; for lo! a prosperous wind Swells in thy sail: the time invites. Adieu!

Hercules re-ascends. Pm. I will but pay my salutations here, And instantly depart. To thee, my cave! 1260 Where I so long have dwelt, I bid farewell: And you, ye nymphs! who on the watery plains Deign to reside, farewell! Farewell, the noise Of beating waves, which I so oft have heard From the rough sea, which, by the black winds 1265 driven. O'erwhelmed me shivering. Oft the Hermæan mount

Echoed my plaintive voice, by wintry storms Afflicted, and return'd me groan for groan. Now, ye fresh fountains! each Lycæan spring! I leave you now. Alas! I little thought 1270 To leave you ever: and thou sea-girt isle, Lemnos, farewell! Permit me to depart By thee unblamed, and with a prosperous gale To go where fate demands, where kindest friends By counsel urge me, where all-powerful Jove 1275 In his unerring wisdom hath decreed.

Cно. Let us be gone, and to the ocean nymphs Our humble prayers prefer, that they would all Propitious smile, and grant us safe return.

1266 A mountain in Lemnos.



ANTIGONE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CREON, king of Thebes.
EURYDICE, wife of Creon.
H.EMON, son of Creon.
ANTIGONE, daughter of Œdipus.
ISMENE, sister of Antigone.
TIRESIAS, a prophet.
A MESSENGER, GUARD, SERVANT, and ATTENDANTS.
CHORUS, composed of ancient men of Thebes.

ANTIGONE.

ARGUMENT.

ETEOCLES and Polynices, sons of Œdipus, having an equal claim to the kingdom of Thebes, agreed to reign year by year, alternately; but Eteocles, succeeding first to the throne by priority of birth, broke the contract, and maintained himself in the possession of his dominions. Polynices, in revenge, raised an army of Argians, and made an incursion into Thebes; where, after great slaughter on both sides, the brothers were slain by each other in single combat. The kingdom now devolved to their uncle Creon, whose first act of supreme power was an edict, forbidding all rites of sepulture to Polynices, as a traitor; and pronouncing instant death on any who should dare to bury him. This inhuman decree, and the penalty that awaited its infraction, failed, however, to deter his sister Antigone from bestowing the last duties to her unfortunate brother; and, being detected in the prosecution of her design, she was sentenced by the tyrant to imprisonment in a cave, where she was to perish with hunger. Hæmon, the son of Creon, and the betrothed husband of Antigone, endeavoured, by his influence with his father, to arrest this cruel mandate; and, failing of success, slew himself. The punishment of Creon did not stop here: for his wife Eurydice, in despair for the death of her son, put a period to her existence; leaving the unhappy monarch to atone, by a fruitless remorse, for his past rigour and injustice.

ACT I.

ANTIGONE, ISMENE.

ART. O my dear sister, my best-loved Ismene!
Is there an evil, by the wrath of Jove
Reserved for Œdipus' unhappy race,

We have felt not already! Sorrow and shame,
And bitterness and anguish,—all that's sad, 5
All that's distressful, hath been ours; and now
This dreadful edict from the tyrant comes
To double our misfortunes. Hast thou heard
What harsh commands he hath imposed on all?
Or art thou still to know what future ills 10
Our foes have yet in store to make us wretched!
Ism. Since that unhappy day, Antigone!
When by each other's hand our brothers fell,
And Greece dismiss'd her armies, I have heard
Nought that could give joy or grief to me. 15
Anr. I thought thou wert a stranger to the
tidings;
And therefore call'd thee forth, that here alone
I might impart them to thee.
Ism. O! what are they!
For something dreadful labours in thy breast.
ANT. Know, then, from Creon, our indulgent
lord, 20
Our hapless brothers met a different fate;
To honour one, and one to infamy,
He hath consign'd: with funeral rites he graced
The body of our dear Eteocles,
While Polynices' wretched carcass lies 25
Unburied, unlamented, left exposed
A feast for hungry vultures on the plain.
No pitying friend will dare to violate
The tyrant's harsh command, for public death
Awaits the offender: Creon comes himself 30
To tell us of it, such is our condition.
This is the crisis, this the hour, Ismene!
That must declare thee worthy of thy birth,
Or show thee mean, base, and degenerate.
Ism. What wouldst thou have me do? Defy his
power? 35
Contemn the laws?
Ant. To act with me, or not:

Ism. Wouldst thou attempt!		_
ANT.	To join	ı
And take the body, my I		
Ism.	Ha!	_
And wouldst thou dare to	bury it, when thus 40	J
We are forbidden!		
	, to bury him:	
He is my brother, and thi		
Therefore, consent or no		
I'll not disgrace my birth	l•	
Ізм.	Hath not the king	
Pronounced it death to a	11 ?	
Ant.	He hath no right, 48	ő
No power to keep me fro		
Ism.	Alas!	
Remember our unhappy	father's fate :	
His eyes torn out by his		
Oppress'd with shame an		
Fruit of his crimes, a mo		^
Dreadful alliance! self-de		•
And last, in one sad day,		
And Polynices, by each of		
Left as we are, deserted		
What from our disobedie		D
But misery and ruin? P	oor, weak women,	
Helpless, nor form'd by r	lature to contend	
With powerful man; we	are his subjects too.	
Therefore to this, and w	orse than this, my sister,	_
We must submit; for me	e, in humblest prayer 60	D
Will I address me to the		
For pardon of that crime		
Sprang from necessity, a		
Since to attempt what w	e can never hope	
To execute, is folly all, a	and madness. 6	5
Ant. Wert thou to pro	ffer what I do not ask,—	
Thy poor assistance, I w	ould scorn it now.	
Act as thou wilt; I'll bur	y him myself;	
Let me perform but that,	and death is welcome.	
SOPE-O		

I'll do the pious deed, and By my dear brother; lovi We'll rest together: to th 'Tis fit we pay obedience We must remain, than we	ng and beloved, ne powers below, ; longer there
There I shall dwell for ev What the gods hold most Ism. I reverence the go Of laws, and unassisted,	er; thou, meantime, 78 precious mayst despise. ods; but, in defiance
It were most dangerous.	o do imo,
Ant.	That be thy excuse,
While I prepare the fune	ral pile.
Ism.	Alas! 80
I tremble for thee.	
Ant. Tre	mble for thyself,
And not for me.	-4.4.33.43
Ism. O! do n	ot tell thy purpose,
I beg thee, do not! I shal Ant. I'd have it know more	vn; and I shall hate thee
For thy concealment, that Thou wouldst proclaim th	
Ism.	Thou hast a hear
Too daring, and ill-suited	to thy fate.
Ant. I know my duty,	and I'll pay it there
Where 'twill be best acce	
Ism.	Couldst thou do it:
But 'tis not in thy power.	
ANT.	When I know that, 90
It will be time enough to	
Ism. It cannot be; 'tis	
	l hate thee: our dead bro-
ther, He too shall hate thee as	his hittorest foo
Go, leave me here to suffe	
Whate'er befalls, it canno	
As not to die with honour	
10 410 111111 4011041	

Since thou wilt have it so; and know, Ismene Pities thy weakness, but admires thy virtue. [Exeunt.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

By Dirce's sweetly-flowing stream, 100 Ne'er did the golden eye of day On Thebes with fairer lustre beam. Or shine with more auspicious ray. See, the proud Argive, with his silver shield And glittering armour, quits the hostile plain : No longer dares maintain the luckless field, But vanquish'd flies, nor checks the loosen'd rein. With dreadful clangour, like the bird of Jove, On snowy wings descending from above, 110 His vaunted powers to this devoted land, In bitterest wrath, did Polynices lead: With crested helmets, and a numerous band He came, and fondly hoped that Thebes should bleed.

ANTISTROPHE I.

High on the lofty tower he stood. 115 And view'd the encircled gates below, With spears that thirsted for our blood, And seem'd to scorn the unequal foe: But fraught with vengeance, ere the rising flame Could waste our bulwarks, or our walls surround, Mars to assist the fiery serpent came, And brought the towering eagle to the ground. That god, who hates the boastings of the proud, Saw the rude violence of the exulting crowd. Already now the triumph was prepared, The wreath of victory, and the festal song, 125 When Jove the clash of golden armour heard, And hurl'd his thunder on the guilty throng.

120 By the dragon, or fiery serpent, we are to understand the Theban army attacked by the eagle Polynices.

STROPHE II.

Then Capaneus, elate with pride, Fierce as the rapid whirlwind came; Eager he seem'd on every side

130

145

To spread the all-devouring flame: But soon he felt the winged lightning's blast,

By angry Heaven with speedy vengeance sent: Down from the lofty turrets headlong cast,

For his foul crimes he met the punishment.

Each at his gate, long time the leaders strove, Then fled, and left their arms to conquering Jove;

Save the unhappy death-devoted pair,

The wretched brethren, who unconquer'd stood:
With rancorous hate inspired, and fell despair, 140
They wreak'd their vengeance in each other's
blood.

ANTISTROPHE II.

And lo! with smiles propitious see,
To Thebes, for numerous scars renown'd!
The goddess comes, fair Victory,
With fame and endless glory crown'd!
Henceforth, no longer vex'd by war's alarms,
Let all our sorrows, all our labours cease:

Come, let us quit the din of rattling arms,
And fill our temples with the songs of peace.
The god of Thebes shall guide our steps aright,
And crown with many a lay the festive night.

But see, still anxious for his native land,
Our king, Menœceus' valiant son, appear:
With some fair omen, by the gods' command,
He comes to meet his aged council here. [Excunt.

128 Capaneus was one of the seven captains who came against Thebes. It is said that, after he had mounted to the top of the scaling-ladders, he was struck dead with lightning.

ACT II.

CREON, CHORUS.

CRE. At length, our empire, shook by civil broils, The gods to peace and safety have restored; Wherefore, my friends! you had our late request That you should meet us here; for well I know Your firm allegiance to great Laius, next 160 To Œdipus, and his unhappy sons; These by each other's hand untimely slain. To me the sceptre doth of right descend, As next in blood. Never-can man be known. His mind, his will, his passions ne'er appear, 165 Till power and office call them forth; for me, "Tis my firm thought, and I have held it ever, That he who rules, and doth not follow that Which wisdom counsels, but, restrained by fear, Shuts up his lips, must be the worst of men; Nor do I deem him worthy, who prefers A friend, how dear soever, to his country. Should I behold (witness, all-seeing Jove!) This city wrong'd. I never would be silent: Never would make the foe of Thebes my friend, For on her safety must depend our own; 176 And if she flourish, we can never want Assistance or support: thus would I act; And therefore have I sent my edict forth Touching the sons of Œdipus, commanding 180 That they should bury him who nobly fought And died for Thebes, the good Eteocles, Gracing his memory with each honour due To the illustrious dead; for Polynices, Abandoned exile! for a brother's blood 185 Thirsting insatiate:—he, who would in flames Have wasted all, his country, and his gods, And made you slaves :—I have decreed, he lie Unburied, his vile carcass to the birds

190

And hungry dogs a prey; there let him rot Inglorious; 'tis my will: for ne'er from me Shall vice inherit virtue's due reward, But him alone, who is a friend to Thebes, Living or dead, shall Creon reverence still.

CHO. Son of Menœceus! 'twas thy great behest Thus to reward them both; thine is the power 19

Oe'r all supreme, the living and the dead.

CRE. Be careful, then, my orders are obey'd. CHO. O, sir! to younger hands commit the task. CRE. I have appointed some to watch the body.

Cно. What then remains for us?

Crg. To see that none, 201
By your connivance, violate the law.

Cно. Scarce will the man be found so fond of death

As to attempt it.

CRE. Death is the reward

Of him who dares it; but offtimes by hope Of sordid gain, are men betray'd to ruin.

Enter Messenger.

Mes. O, king! I cannot boast that, hither sent, I came with speed, for oft my troubled thoughts Have driven me back: oft to myself I said, "Why dost thou seek destruction! Yet again 210 If thou report it not, from other tongues Creon must hear the tale, and thou wilt suffer." With doubts like these oppress'd, slowly I came, And the short way seem'd like a tedious journey. At length I come, resolved to tell thee all: 215 Whate'er the event, I must submit to fate.

CRE. Whence are thy fears, and why this hesitation?

Mrs. First for myself; I merit not thy wrath; It was not I, nor have I seen the man

CRE. Something of weight 290 Thou hast to impart, by this unusual care

To guard thee from our anger.

Who did the guilty deed.

Mzs. Fear will come

Where danger is.

CRE. Speak, and thou hast thy pardon.
Mrs. The body of Polynices some rash hand
Hath buried, scatter'd o'er his corpse the dust, 225
And funeral rites perform'd.

Who dared do this? CRE. Mes. 'Tis yet unknown: no mark of instrument Is left behind: the earth still level all, The guard, Nor worn by track of chariot-wheel. Who watch'd that day, call it a miracle; No tomb was raised; light lay the scatter'd earth, As only meant to avoid the imputed curse: Nor could we trace the steps of dog or beast Passing that way. Instant a tumult rose; The guards accused each other; naught was proved, But each suspected each, and all denied, 236 Offering, in proof of innocence, to grasp The burning steel, to walk through fire, and take Their solemn oath they knew not of the deed. At length, one mightier than the rest proposed 240 (Nor could we think of better means) that all Should be to thee discover'd: 'twas my lot To bring the unwelcome tidings; and I come To pour my news, unwilling, into ears 245 Unwilling to receive it; for I know

None ever loved the messenger of ill.

Cho. To me it seems as if the hand of Heaven
Were in this deed.

CRE. Be silent, ere my rage,
Thou rash old man! pronounce thee fool and dotard.
Horrid suggestion! think'st thou then the gods 250
Take care of men like these! Would they preserve
Or honour him who came to burn their altars,
Profane their rites, and trample on their laws!
Will they reward the bad! It cannot be:
But well I know, the murmuring citizens 255
Brook'd not our mandate, shook their heads in secret,
And, ill-affected to me, would not stoop

Their haughty crests, or bend beneath my yoke: By hire corrupted, some of these have dared The venturous deed. Gold is the worst of ills 260 That ever plagued mankind; this wastes our cities. Drives forth their natives to a foreign soil, Taints the pure heart, and turns the virtuous mind To basest deeds; artificer of fraud Supreme, and source of every wickedness. 265 The wretch, corrupted for this hateful purpose, Must one day suffer; for, observe me well; As I revere that Power by whom I swear, Almighty Jove; if you conceal him from me, If to my eyes you do not bring the traitor, 270 Know, death alone shall not suffice to glut My vengeance: living shall you hang in torments, Till you confess, till you have learn'd from me There is a profit not to be desired; And own, dishonest gains have ruin'd more 275 Than they have saved. O king! may I depart, MES. Or wait thy farther orders? Know'st thou not Thy speech is hateful? Hence! Mes. Wherefore, my lord? CRE. Know you not why? MES. I but offend your ear: They who have done the deed afflict your soul. 280 CRE. Away; thy talk but makes thy guilt appear. Mrs. My lord, I did not do it. Thou hast sold Cre. Thy life for gain. MES. 'Tis cruel to suspect me. CRE. Thou talk'st it bravely; but remember all. Unless you do produce him, you shall find The miseries which on ill-got wealth await. Mes. Would he were found! that we must leave to fate.

Be it as it may, I never will return.

Thus safe beyond my hopes, 'tis fit I pay
My thanks to the kind gods who have preserved me.

[Exit.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Since first this active world began,
Nature is busy all in every part;
But, passing all in wisdom and in art,
Superior shines inventive man;
Fearless of wintry winds and circling waves,
He rides the ocean and the tempest braves:
On him, unwearied Earth, with lavish hand,
Immortal goddess! all her bounty pours;
Patient beneath the rigid plough's command, 299
Year after year she yields her plenteous stores.

ANTISTROPHE I.

To drive the natives of the wood
From their rude haunts, or in the cruel snare
To catch the wing'd inhabitants of air,
Or trap the scaly brood!
To tame the fiery courser, yet unbroke
With the hard rein, or to the untried yoke
To bend the mountain bull, who, wildly free,
O'er the steep rocks had wander'd unconfin'd;
These are the arts of mortal industry,
And such the subtle power of human kind.
310

STROPHE II.

By learning and fair science crown'd,
Behold him now full fraught with wisdom's lore,
The laws of nature anxious to explore,
With depth of thought profound:
But naught, alas! can human wisdom see
315
In the dark bosom of futurity:
The power of Wisdom may awhile prevail,
Awhile suspend a mortal's fleeting breath;
But never can her fruitless arts avail,
To conquer fate, or stop the hand of death.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Man's ever active, changeful will,
Sometimes to good shall bend his virtuous mind;
Sometimes behold him to foul deeds inclined,
And prone to every ill.
Who guiltless keeps the laws is still approved 325
By every tongue, and by his country loved;
But he who doth not, from his native land
A wretched exile, far, O! far from me,
May he be driven, by angry Heaven's command,
And live devote to shame and infamy! 330
Cho. Amazement! can it be Antigone,
Or do my eyes deceive me! No, she comes.

Сно. Amazement! can it be Antigone,
Or do my eyes deceive me! No, she comes.
O wretched daughter of a wretched father!
Hast thou transgress'd the laws, and art thou taken
In this adventurous deed, unhappy maid?

335

Enter Antigone and Guard.

GUARD. Behold the woman who hath done the deed;
In the very act of burial we surprised her.

Where is the king!

Cho. Return'd as we could wish; Ey'n now he comes this way.

Enter CREON. To TO

Whom have we here? CRE. Doth Justice smile upon us? O my lord! 340 GUARD. Never should man too confident assert. Much less by oath should bind himself to aught; For soon our judgments change, and one opinion Destroys another. By thy threats alarm'd, But now I vow'd I never would return: 345 Yet, thus preserved beyond my hopes, I come, Bound by that duty which I owe to thee And to my country, to bring here this virgin, Whom, as she sprinkled o'er her brother's dust The varied wreath, we seized: the willing task 350 Was mine, nor as of late by lot determin'd. Receive her, then, O king! judge and condemn The guilty, as it best becomes thy wisdom; Henceforth I stand acquitted.

Cre.

But say, how,

Where didst thou find her?

GUARD.

To say all, 'twas she 355

Who buried Polynices.

CRE. Art thousure?

Guard. These eyes beheld her.

CRE. But say, how discover'd !
GUARD. Thus then it was: no sooner had I left

thee,

Than, mindful of thy wrath, with careful hands From off the putrid carcass we removed 360 The scatter'd dust; then, to avoid the stench Exhaling noisome, to a hill retired; There watch'd at distance, till the mid-day sun Scorch'd o'er our heads: sudden a storm arose, Shook every leaf, and rattled through the grove, 365 Filling the troubled element. We closed Our eyes, and patient bore the wrath of Heaven: At length the tempest ceased; when we beheld This virgin issuing forth, and heard her cries Distressful, like the plaintive bird, who views The plunder'd nest, and mourns her ravish'd young: Ev'n thus the maid, when on the naked corse She cast her eyes, loud shriek'd, and cursed the hand That did the impious deed: then sprinkled o'er The crumbled earth; and from a brazen urn, 375 Of richest work, to the loved relics thrice Her due libations poured: we saw, and straight Pursued her; unappall'd she seemed, and still, As we did question her, confess'd it all. It pleased, and yet methought it grieved me too. To find ourselves released from wo, is bliss 381 Supreme: but thus to see our friends unhappy, Imbitters all. I must be thankful still For my own safety, which I hold most dear.

CRE. Speak thou, who bend'st to earth thy drooping head: 385 Dost thou deny the fact? ANT. Denvit! no: CRE. [to the Guard.] Retire, for thou art free; and turning to ARTIGORE. Be brief and tell me: heardst thou our decree? Ant. I did; 'twas public: how could I avoid it? CRE. And darest thou, then, to disobey the law! Ant. I had it not from Jove, nor the just gods 391 Who rule below; nor could I ever think A mortal's law of power or strength sufficient To abrogate the unwritten law divine, Immutable, eternal, not like these Of yesterday, but made ere time began. Shall man persuade me, then, to violate Heaven's great commands, and make the gods my foes ? Without thy mandate, death had one day come: For who shall 'scape it! and if now I fall A little sooner, 'tis the thing I wish. To those who live in misery, like me, Believe me, king! 'tis happiness to die. Without remorse I shall embrace my fate: But to my brother had I left the rites 405 Of sepulture unpaid, I then indeed Had been most wretched. This to thee may seem Madness and folly; if it be, 'tis fit I should act thus: it but resembles thee. CRE. Sprung from a sire perverse and obstinate. Like him, she cannot bend beneath misfortune: 411 But know, the proudest hearts may be subdued. Hast thou not mark'd the hardest steel by fire Made soft and flexible? Myself have seen By a slight rein the fiery courser held. 415 'Tis not for slaves to be so haughty; yet

This proud offender, not content, it seems, To violate my laws, adds crime to crime; Smiles at my threats, and glories in her guilt.

If I should suffer her to 'scape my vengeance, 420

She were the man, not I: but though she sprang

Ey'n from my sister, were I bound to her

By ties more dear than is Hercæan Jove,

She should not 'scape: her sister too, I find

Accomplice in the deed. Go, call her forth: 425

[to one of the attendants.]

She is within; I saw her raving there, Her senses lost; the common fate of those Who practise dark and deadly wickedness.

I cannot bear to see the guilty stand

Convicted of their crimes, and yet pretend 430
To gloss them o'er with specious names of virtue.

Ant. I am thy captive; thou wouldst have my life:

Will that content thee?

CRE. Yes, 'tis all I wish.

ART. Why this delay, then, when thou know'st my words

To thee as hateful are as thine to me! 435 Therefore despatch: I cannot live to do

A deed more glorious; and so these would all [pointing to the Chorus.

Confess, were not their tongues restrain'd by fear. It is the tyrant's privilege, we know.

To speak and act whate'er he please uncensur'd. 440 CRE. Lives there another in the land of Thebes,

Who thinks as thou dost?

ANT. Yes, a thousand; these, These think so too, but dare not utter it.

CRE. Dost thou not blush ?

ANT. For what? Why blush to pay

A sister's duty!

423 Jupiter Herceus, so called from being the guardian of every man's private habitation; in times of war and calamity altars were erected to him, to which the unhappy fied as an asy lum.

Sopri.-P

Cre. But, Eteocles, Say, was not he thy brother too! Ant. He was. CRE. Why then thus reverence him who least deserved it? ANT. Perhaps that brother thinks not so. Cre. He must. If thou pay'st equal honour to them both. ANT. He was a brother, not a slave. CRE. One fought 450 Against that country which the other saved. Ant. But equal death the rights of sepulture Decrees to both. CRE. What! reverence alike The guilty and the innocent? Perhaps The gods below esteem it just. A foe. 455 Though dead, should as a foe be treated still. ANT. My love shall go with thine, but not my CRE. Go. then, and love them in the tomb: but know. No woman rules in Thebes while Creon lives. Cно. Lo! at the portal stands the fair Ismene; Tears in her lovely eyes, a cloud of grief Sits on her brow, wetting her beauteous cheek With pious sorrow for a sister's fate.

Enter ISMENE.

CRE. Come forth! thou serpent! little did I think That I had nourish'd two such deadly foes, 465 To suck my blood, and cast me from my throne. What sayest thou? Wert thou accomplice in the deed,

Or wilt thou swear that thou art innocent?

Ism. I do acknowledge it, if she permit me,

I was accomplice, and the crime was mine.

Ant. 'Tis false; thou didst refuse, nor would I hold Communion with thee. But in thy misfortunes Let me partake, my sister! let me be A fellow-sufferer with thee. Witness, Death. And ye infernal gods! to which belongs 475 The great, the glorious deed. I do not love These friends in word alone. Ism. Antigone! Do not despise me; I but ask to die With thee, and pay due honours to the dead. ANT. Pretend not to a merit which thou hast not. Live thou; it is enough for me to perish. 481 Ism. But what is life without thee! Ask thy friend And patron there. [pointing to Creon. Why that unkind reproach. When thou shouldst rather comfort me! Alas! Ant. It gives me pain, when I am forced to speak 485 So bitterly against thee. Ism. Is there aught That I can do to save thee! Save thyself: I shall not envy thee. And will you not Permit me then to share your fate! Thy choice Was life; 'ts mine to die. I told thee oft 490 It would be st. Thou didst, and was't not well Thus to fulfil thy prophecy? Ism. The crime Was mutual, mitual be the punishment. ANT. Fear not: thy life is safe; but mine long aince Devoted to the dead

CRE. Both seem deprived Of reason; one, indeed, was ever thus. Ism. O king! the mind doth seldom keep her seat. When sunk beneath misfortunes. Sunk indeed Thou wert in wretchedness to join with her. Ism. But what is life without Antigone? 500 CRE. Then think not of it; for she is no more. Ism. Wouldst thou destroy thy son's long-destin'd wife ? CRE. O! we shall find a fitter bride. Ales! He will not think so. I'll not wed my sen CRE. To a base woman. O, my dearest Hæmon! 505 And is it thus thy father doth disgrace thee ? CRE. Such an alliance were as hateful to me As is thyself. Wilt thou then take her from him! Ism. CRE. Their nuptials shall be finished by death. Ism. She then must perish? CRE. So must you and I. 510 Therefore no more delay: go, take them hence: Confine them both: henceforth they shall not stir. When death is near at hand, the bravest fly.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Thrice happy they whose days in pleasure flow;
Who never taste the bitter cup of wo:
For when the wrath of Heaven descends
On some devoted house, there foul disgrace,
With Grief and all her train, attends,
And shame and sorrow overwheln the wretched
race;
Ev'n as the Thracian sea, when ver'd with storms,
While darkness hangs incumbent o'er the deep,

When the black North the troubled scene of And the black sands in rapid whirlwinds	leforms,
The groaning waves beat on the trembling	
And echoing hills rebellow to the roar.	525
ANTISTROPHE I.	
O Labdacus! thy house must perish all.	
Ev'n now I see the stately ruin fall;	
Shame heap'd on shame, and ill on ill,	
Disgrace and never-ending woes;	
Some angry god pursues thee still,	530
Nor grants or safety or repose:	9
One fair and lovely branch unwithered st	.00a,
And braved the inclement skies;	
But Pluto comes, inexorable god! She sinks, she raves, she dies.	201
SHE SHIKS, SHE TAVES, SHE CHES. STROPHE II.	535
Shall man below control the gods above!	
Or human pride restrain the power of Jove	1
Whose eyes by all-subduing sleep	, .
Are never clos'd, as feeble mortals' are:	
But still their watchful vigils keep	540
Through the large circle of the eternal	rear.
Great lord of all, whom neither time nor a	
With envious stroke, can weaken or dec	
He who alone the future can presage,	-,
Who knows alike to-morrow as to-day;	545
While wretched man is doom'd, by Heaven'	s decree,
To toil and pain, to sin and misery.	•
ANTISTROPHE II.	
Ofttimes the flatterer Hope, that joy inspir	
Fills the proud heart of man with fond des	
He. careless traveller, wanders still	550
Through life, unmindful of deceit;	
Nor dreads the danger till he feel	
The burning sands beneath his feet.	
When Heaven impels to guilt the maddeni	
Then good like ill appears;	555
And vice, for universal hate design'd,	f Prount
The face of virtue wears.	Execunt.

ACT III.

CREON, HÆMON, CHORUS.

Cho. Brhold, O king! thy youngest hope appear. The noble Hæmon; lost in grief he seems, Weeping the fate of poor Antigone. CRE. He comes, and better than a prophet, soon Shall we divine his inmost thoughts. My son. Com'st thou, well knowing our decree, to mourn Thy promised bride, and angry to dispute A father's will; or, whatsoe'er we do 565 Still to hold best, and pay obedience to us? Ham. My father, I am thine: do thou command, And I in all things shall obey: 'tis fit My promised nuptial rites give place to thee. Cre. It will become thee with obedience thus To bear thee ever, and in every act To vield submissive to a father's will. 'Tis therefore, O my son! that men do pray For children, who with kind officious duty May guard their helpless age, resist their foes, 575 And, like their parents, love their parents' friend: But he who gets a disobedient child, What doth he get but misery and wo? His enemies will laugh the wretch to scorn. Take heed, my son, thou yield not up thy reason, In hopes of pleasure from a worthless woman; 581 For cold is the embrace of impious love, And deep the wounds of false, dissembled friendship. Hate, then, thy bitterest foe, despise her arts, 585 And leave her to be wedded to the tomb. Of all the city, her alone I found Rebellious; but I have her, nor shall Thebes Say I'm a liar: I pronounced her fate. And she must perish: let her call on Jove, Who guards the rites of kindred, and the ties 590 Of nature; for if those by blood united Transgress the laws, I hold myself more near

Ev'n to a stranger: who in private life
Is just and good, will to his country too
Be faithful ever; but the man who, proud
And fierce of soul, contemns authority,
Despiseth justice, and o'er those who rule
Would have dominion, such shall never gain
The applauding voice of Creon. He alone,
Whom the consenting citizens approve,
The acknowledged sovereign, should in all command;

Just or unjust his laws, in things of great Or little import;—whatsoe'er he bids, A subject is not to dispute his will: He knows alike to rule and to obey ; 605 And in the day of battle will maintain The foremost rank, his country's best defence. Rebellion is the worst of human ills: This ruins kingdoms, this destroys the peace Of noblest families, this wages war, 610 And puts the brave to flight; while fair obedience Keeps all in safety: to preserve it, ever Should be a king's first care. We will not yield To a weak woman: if we must submit, At least we will be conquered by a man, 615 Nor by a female arm thus fall inglorious.

HEM. Wisdom, my father, is the noblest gift That gods bestow on man, and better far Than all his treasures: what thy judgment deems Most fit I cannot, would not reprehend. 620 Others, perhaps, might call it wrong; for me, My duty only bids me to inform you If aught be done or said that casts reproach Or blame on you. Such terror would thy looks Strike on the low plebeian, that he dare not 625 Say aught unpleasing to thee: be it mine To tell thee, then, what I of late have heard In secret whisper'd. Your afflicted people United mourn the unhappy virgin's fate 630 Unmerited, most wretched of her sex,

To die for deeds of such distinguish'd virtue: For that she would not let a brother lie Unburied, to the dogs and birds a prey. "Was it not rather," say the murm'ring crowd. "Worthy of golden honours and fair praise ?" Such are their dark and secret discontents. Thy welfare and thy happiness alone Are all my wish: what can a child desire More than a father's honour? or a father More than a child's! O! do not then retain 640 Thy will, and still believe no sense but thine Can judge aright: the man who proudly thinks. None but himself or eloquent or wise, By time betray'd, is branded for an idiot. True wisdom will be ever glad to learn. 645 And not too fond of power. Observe the trees, That bend to wintry torrents; how their boughs Unhurt remain; while those that brave the storm. Uprooted torn, shall wither and decay. The pilot, whose unslackened sail defies 650 Contending winds, with shatter'd bark pursues His dangerous course. Then mitigate thy wrath, My father, and give way to sweet repentance. If to my youth be aught of judgment given, He who by knowledge and true wisdom's rules 655 Guides every action, is the first of men: But since to few that happiness is given, The next is he who, not too proud to learn, Follows the counsels of the wise and good.

CHO. O king! if right the youth advise, 'tis fit That thou shouldst listen to him; so to thee 661 Should he attend, as best may profit both.

CRE. And have we lived so long then, to be taught

At last our duty by a boy like thee !

H.E.M. Young though I am, I still may judge aright: Wisdom in action lies, and not in years. 666
CRE. Call you it wisdom then to honour those Who disobey the laws!

I would not have thee HÆM. Protect the wicked. Is she not most guilty? HEM. Thebes doth not think her so. Shall Thebes prescribe 670 To Creon's will ! How weakly dost thou talk! Cre Am I king here, or shall another reign? HAM. 'Tis not a city where but one man rules. (RE. The city is the king's. HÆM. Go by thyself then. and rule henceforth o'er a deserted land. CRE. [to the Chorus] He pleads the woman's cause. HÆM. If thou art she. I do; for, O! I speak but for thy sake; My care is all for thee. Abandoned wretch! CRE. Dispute a father's will? HÆM. I see thee err. And therefore do it. Is it then a crime To guard my throne and rights from violation? HEM. He cannot guard them who contemns the gods. And violates their laws. O! thou art worse, More impious ev'n than she thou hast defended. HEM. Naught have I done to merit this reproof. CRE. Hast thou not pleaded for her? 686 HÆM. No; for thee, And for myself: for the infernal gods. Cre. But know she shall not live to be thy wife. HEM. Then she must die: another too may fall. CRE. Ha! dost thou threaten me! Audacious traitor! 690 Ham. What are my threats? Alas! thou heed'st them not.

CRE. That thou shalt see; thy insolent instruction

Shall cost thee dear.

But, for thou ab my father. Нжи. Now would I say thy senses were impared. CRE. Think not to make me thus thy corn and laughter, Thou woman's slave! Still wouldst thou speak tayself. And never listen to the voice of truth: Such is thy will. Now, by Olympus here Cre. I swear, thy vile reproaches shall not pass Unpunish'd: call her forth: before her bridegroom [to one of the attendants. She shall be brought, and perish in his sight. Ham. These eyes shall never see it: let the slaves Who fear thy rage, submit to it; but know, 'Tis the last time thou shalt behold thy son. Exit Hamon. Cнo. Sudden in anger fled the youth. O king! A mind oppress'd like his is desperate. 706 CRE. Why, let him go; and henceforth better learn Than to oppose me: be it as it may, Death is their portion, and he shall not save them. Cho. Must they both die then? No; 'tis well advised: CRE. Ismene lives; but for Antigone,— CHO. O king! what death is she decreed to suffer? CRE. Far from the hands of men I'll have her led, And in a rocky cave beneath the earth, Buried alive: with her a little food. 715 Enough to save the city from pollution: There let her pray the only god she worships To save her from this death: perhaps he will; Or if he doth not, let her learn how vain It is to reverence the powers below. [Exit Creon.

CHORUS.

TROPHE I.

WIROPHE I.	
Mighty power, all powers above! Great unconquerable Love!	721
Thou who liest in dimple sleek,	•
On the tender virgin's cheek;—	
Thee the rich and great obey;	725
Every creature owns thy sway.	
O'er the wide earth and o'er the main	
Extends thy universal reign;	
All thy maddening influence know,	
Gods above and men below:	730
All thy powers resistless prove,	
Great unconquerable Love!	
ANTISTROPHE I.	
Thou canst lead the just astray	
From wisdom and from virtue's way:	
The ties of nature cease to bind,	735
When thou disturb'st the captive mind.	
Behold, enslaved by fond desire,	
The youth contemns his aged sire;	
Enamour'd of his beauteous maid,	
Nor laws nor parents are obey'd:	740
Thus Venus wills it from above,	
And great, unconquerable Love.	: - c
Cho. Ev'n I, beyond the common bounds of	griei,
ulge my sorrows; and from these sad eyes	

Indulge my sorrows; and from these sad eyes
Fountains of tears will flow, when I behold
Antigone, unhappy maid, approach
The bed of death, and hasten to the tomb.

Enter ANTIGONE.

ART. Farewell, my friends! my countrymen, farewell!

Here on her last sad journey you behold The poor Antigone; for never more Shall I return, or view the light of day. The hand of death conducts me to the shore

750

Of dreary Acheron; no nuptial song Reserved for me, the wretched bride alone Of Plut now, and wedded to the tomb.

755

770

CHe. Be it thy glory still, that by the sword That fall'st not, nor the slow-consuming hand Of foul distemperature; but, far distinguished Above thy sex, and to thyself a law, Doom'st thy own death: so shall thy honour live, 760 And future ages venerate thy name.

ANT. Thus Tantalus' unhappy daughter fell, The Phrygian Niobe: high on the top Of towering Sipylus, the rock enfolds her, Ev'n as the ivy twines her tendrils round 765 The lofty oak: there still (as Fame reports) To melting showers and everlasting snow Obvious she stands, her beauteous bosom wet With tears, that from her ever-streaming eyes Incessant flow; her fate resembles mine.

Cho. A goddess she, and from a goddess sprung: We are but mortal, and of mortals born. To meet the fate of gods thus in thy life, And in thy death, O! 'tis a glorious doom.

Ant. Alas! thou mock'st me. Why, while yet I 775 live.

Wouldst thou afflict me with reproach like this? O my dear country, and my dearer friends, Its bless'd inhabitants, renowned Thebes! And ye, Dircæan fountains! you I call To witness that I die by laws unjust; 780 To my deep prison unlamented go, To my sad tomb, no fellow-sufferer there

To sooth my woes, the living or the dead. CHO. Rashness like thine must meet with such re-

ward: A father's crimes, I fear, lie heavy on thee. 785 Ant. O, thou hast touched my worst of miseries! My father's fate, the woes of all our house, The wretched race of Labdacus, renown'd For its misfortunes! O, the guilty bed

Of those from whom I sprang! unhappy offspring
Of parents most unhappy! Lo! to them 791
I go accursed; a virgin and a slave.
O my poor brother! most unfortunate
Were thy sad nuptials; they have slain thy sister.
Cho. Thy piety demands our praise; but know,
Authority is not to be despised: 796
"Twas thy own rashness brought destruction on thee
Ant. Thus friendless, unlamented must I tread
The destined path, no longer to behold
Your sacred light, and none shall mourn my fate. 800

Enter CREON.

Car. Know ye not, slaves like her to death devoted Would never cease their wailings! Wherefore is it You thus delay to execute my orders? Let her be carried instant to the cave, And leave her there alone, to live, or die. 805 Her blood rests not on us; but she no longer Shall breathe on earth. Exit Creon. O dreadful marriage-bed! O my deep dungeon! my eternal home. Whither I go to join my kindred dead! For not a few hath fell Persephone 810 Already taken; to her I go, the last And most unhappy, ere my time was come; But still I have sweet hope I shall not go Unwelcome to my father; nor to thee, My mother. Dear to thee, Eteocles, 815 Still shall I ever be: these pious hands Wash'd your pale bodies, and adorn'd you both With rites sepulchral, and libations due. And thus, my Polynices! for my care Of thee am I rewarded; and the good 820

784 Polynicse married the daughter of Adrastus, who, in defence of his son-in-law, lod his Argians against Thebes: thus his marriage was the cause of his death, and the decree against Antigona consequent on it.

SUPM. - Q

Alone shall praise me. For a husband dead, Nor, had I been a mother, for my children, Would I have dared to violate the laws: Another husband and another child Might sooth affliction; but, my parents dead, 825 A brother's loss could never be repair'd; And therefore did I dare the venturous deed. And therefore die by Creon's dread command. Ne'er shall I taste of Hymen's joys, or know A mother's pleasures in her infant race; 830 But, friendless and forlorn, alive descend Into the dreary mansions of the dead. And how have I offended the just gods? But wherefore call on them? Will they protect me. When thus I meet with the reward of ill 835 For doing good? If this be just, ye gods! If I am guilty, let me suffer for it: But if the crime be theirs, O! let them feel That weight of misery they have laid on me! Cho. The storm continues, and her angry soul Still pours its sorrows forth. 841

Enter CREON.

CRE. The slaves shall suffer
For this delay.

Ant. Alas! death cannot be
Far from that voice.

CRE. I would not have thee hope
A moment's respite.

Ant. O my country's gods!

And thou, my native Thebes! I leave you now. 845
Look on me, princes; see the last of all
My royal race; see what I suffer; see
From whom I bear it;—from the worst of men,

Only because I did delight in virtue. [Exit Creen.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Remember what fair Danae endured,
Condemned to change heaven's cheerful light
For scenes of horror and of night,
Within a brazen tower long time immured:
Yet was the maid of noblest race,
And honour'd ev'n with Joves embrace.

855
But, O! when fate decrees a mortal's wo,
Naught can reverse the doom, or stop the blow,
Nor heaven above, nor earth and seas below.

ANTISTROPHE I.

The Thracian monarch, Dryas' hapless son,
Chain'd to a rock, in torment lay,
And breathed his angry soul away,
By wrath misguided, and by pride undone;
Taught by the offended god to know
From foul reproach what evils flow:
For he the rites profaned with slanderous tongue;
The holy flame he quench'd, disturb'd the song, 866
And waked to wrath the Muses' tuneful throng.

STROPHE II.

His turbid waves, where Salmydessus roll'd And proud Cyanea's rocks divide the flood, 869 There from thy temple, Mars! didst thou behold The sons of Phineus weltering in their blood.

850 Acrisius, king of the Argives, having been warned by an oracle that he should be slain by his grandson, shut up his daughter Danae in a brazen tower; Jupiter, however, according to the poets, gained access to her, by transforming himself into a golden shower.

859 Lycurgus, king of Thrace, for contemning or disturbing the rites of Bacchus, was chained to a rock, where he perished.
868 Salmydessus was a river in Thrace, near which was a temple dedicated to Mars. The Cyaneze were two rocks, or egtall islands, near the Thracian Bosphorus.

S71 Plexippus and Pandion, whose eyes were put out by their stepmother idea, the wife of Phineus, after the death of their own mother Cleopatra, the daughter of Boreas and Orithyia, whose fate is alluded to in the latter part of the ode.

A mother did the cruel deed; A mother bade her children bleed: Both, by her impious hand deprived of light, In vain lamented long their ravish'd sight,

And closed their eyes in never-ending night.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Long time they wept a better mother's fate, Unhappy offspring of a luckless bed! Yet nobly born, and eminently great

Was she, and 'mid sequester'd caverns bred; 880;

875

Her father's angry storms among, Daughter of gods, from Boreas sprung. Equal in swiftness to the bounding steed, She skimm'd the mountains with a courser's speed: Yet was the nymph to death and misery decreed. Exeunt.

ACT IV.

TIRESIAS, GUIDE, CREON, CHORUS.

Tir. Princes of Thebes! behold, conducted hither By my gentle guide (such is the blind man's fate), Tiresias comes.

O venerable prophet! Cre.

What hast thou to impart?

Tir. I will inform thee.

Observe, and be obedient.

Have I not Cre. 890

Been ever so?

Thou hast; and therefore Thebes Hath flourish'd still—

CRE. By thy protecting hand. Tir. Therefore be wise; for know, this very hour Is the important crisis of thy fate.

886 The name of princes among the Greeks was given, not only to sovereigns, but frequently to the principal and most honourable members of the commonwealth. Tiresias, we see, compliments the ancient citizens of Thebes, who composed the chorus, with this title.

Caz. Speak, then, what is it? How I dread thy words!

Tir. When thou hast heard the portents which my art

But now discover'd, thou wilt see it all. Know, then, that sitting on my ancient throne Augurial, whence each divination comes, Sudden a strange unusual noise was heard 900 Of birds, whose loud and barbarous dissonance I knew not how to interpret: by the sound Of clashing wings, I could discover well That with their bloody claws they tore each other. Amazed and fearful, instantly 1 tried, On burning alters holy sacrifice; When, from the victim, lo! the sullen flame Aspired not: smother'd in the ashes, still Laid the moist flesh, and, roll'd in smoke, repell'd The rising fire; while from their fat the thighs 910 Were separate: all these signs of deadly omen, Boding dark vengeance, did I learn from him.

[pointing to the guide.

He is my leader, king! and I am thine. Then mark me well; from thee these evils flow; From thy unjust decree; our altars all 915 Have been polluted by the unhallow'd food Of birds and dogs, that prey'd upon the corse Of wretched Œdipus' unhappy son: Nor will the gods accept our offer'd prayers, Or from our hands receive the sacrifice: No longer will the birds send forth their sounds Auspicious, fatten'd thus with human blood. Consider this, my son! and, O! remember. To err is human; 'tis the common lot Of frail mortality: and he alone 925 Is wise and happy, who, when ills are done, Persists not, but would heal the wound he made; But self-sufficient obstinacy ever Is folly's utmost height. Where is the glory 930 To slay the slain, or persecute the dead?

I wish thee well, and therefore have spoke thus: When those who love advise, 'tis sweet to learn. CRE. I know, old man, I am the general mark, The butt of all, and you all aim at me: For me, I know, your prophecies were made. 935 And I am sold to this detested race; Betray'd to them. But make your gains; go, pur chase Your Sardian amber, and your Indian gold; They shall not buy a tomb for Polynices: No, should the eagle seek him for his food, 940 And, towering, bear him to the throne of Jove, I would not bury him; for well I know, The gods by mortals cannot be polluted; But the best men, by sordid gain corrupt, Say all that's ill, and fall beneath the lowest. Tir. Who knows this, or who dare accuse us of it? CRE. What mean'st thou by that question? Ask'st thou who? Tir. How far is wisdom beyond every good? CRE. As far as folly beyond every ill. TIR. That's a distemper thou'rt afflicted with. 950 CRE. I'll not revile a prophet. TIR. But thou dost: Thou'lt not believe. Your prophetic race Are lovers all of gold. Tyrants are so, TIR. Howe'er ill gotten. Know'st thou 'tis a king Thou'rt talking thus to! Tir. Yes, I know it well; 955 A king, who owes to me his country's safety. CRE. Thou'rt a wise prophet, but thou art unjust. Tir. Thou wilt oblige me then to utter that

CRE. Speak out; Say what thou wilt, but say it not for hire. 906

Which I had purposed to conceal.

Trs. Thus may it seem to thee.

Cre.

But know, old man,

I am not to be sold. Remember this: Not many days shall the bright sun perform His stated course, ere, sprung from thy own loins, Thyself shall yield a victim: in thy turn. Thou too shalt weep, for that thy cruel sentence Decreed a guiltless virgin to the tomb, And kept on earth, unmindful of the gods, Ungraced, unburied, an unhallow'd corse Which not to thee, nor to the gods above 970 Of right belonged; 'twas arbitrary power. But the avenging Furies lie conceal'd; The ministers of death have spread the snare. And with like woes await to punish thee. Do I say this from hopes of promised gold? 975 Pass but little time, and thou shalt hear The shricks of men; the women's loud laments, O'er all thy palace; see the offended people Together rage; thy cities all by dogs And beasts and birds polluted, and the stench Of filth obscene on every altar laid. Thus from my angry soul have I sent forth Its keenest arrows (for thou hast provoked me); Nor shall they fly in vain, or thou escape The destined blow. Now, boy, conduct me home: On younger heads the tempest of his rage Shall fall; but, henceforth, let him learn to speak In humbler terms, and bear a better mind.

Exit Tiresias.

Cho. He's gone, and dreamil were his prophecies:

989
Since these gray hairs were o'er my temple spread,
Naught from these lips hath flow'd but sacred truth.

970 The heathen deities were divided into the gods above, and the gods below; to the latter of these belonged the care of the dead, whom Creon had offended by refusing burial to the corpse of Polynices.

CRE. I know there hath not, and am troubled much

For the event: 'tis grating to submit; And yet the mind, spite of itself, must yield In such distress.

CHO. Son of Menœceus! now

995

۱

Thou need'st most counsel.

CRE. What wouldst thou advise?

I will obey thee.

Cно. Set the virgin free, And let a tomb be raised for Polynices.

CRE. And dost thou counsel thus! and must I yield!
CHO. Immediately, O king: for vengeance falls
With hasty footsteps on the guilty head. 1001
CRE. I cannot, yet I must reverse the sentence:

There is no struggling with necessity.

Сно. Do it thyself, nor trust another hand.

CRE. I will; and you, my servants, be prepared; Each with his axe quick hasten to the place. 1006 Myself (for thus I have resolved) will go, And the same hand that bound shall set her free; For, O! I fear 'tis wisest still through life To keep our ancient laws, and follow virtue. 1010

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Bacchus, by various names to mortals known,
Fair Semele's illustrious son!
Offspring of thunder-bearing Jove,
Who honor'st famed Italia with thy love!
Who dwell'st where erst the dragon's teeth
strow'd,
1015

Or where Ismenus pours his gentle flood; Who dost o'er Ceres' hallow'd rites preside, And at thy native Thebes propitious still reside.

Where famed Parnassus' forked hills uprise, To thee ascends the sacrifice;

1020

Corycia's nymphs attend below,
While from Castalia's fount fresh waters flow.
O'er Nysa's mountains wreaths of ivy twine,
And mix their tendrils with the clustering vine:
Around their master crowd the virgin throng, 1025
And praise the god of Thebes in never-dying song.

STROPHE II.

Happiest of cities, Thebes! above the rest
By Semele and Bacchus bless'd!
O! visit now thy once beloved abode!
O! heal our woes, thou kind, protecting god! 1030
From steep Parnassus, or the Eubœan sea,
With smiles auspicious come, and bring with thee
Health, jey, and peace, and fair prosperity.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Immortal leader of the maddening choir,
Whose torches blaze with unextinguish'd fire! 1035
Great-son of Jove, who guid'st the tuneful throng,
Thou, who presidest o'er the nightly song,
Come with thy Naxian maids, a festive train,
Who, wild with joy, and raging o'er the plain, 1039
For thee the dance prepare, to thee devote the strain.

[Execunt]

ACT V.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

Mrs. Ye race of Cadmus, sons of ancient Thebes, Henceforth no state of human life by me Shall be or valued or despised; for all

1021 The Muses, so called from Corycium, at the foot of Mount Parnassus.

1023 Parnassus is described by the poets as having two tops; one called Cirrha, sacred to Apollo; the other Nysa, sacred to Bacchus; there was also a city in Arcadia of this name, where Bacchus was nursed.

1038 Naxos was one of the Cyclades, islands in the Archipelago, famous for its vines: of the nymphs of Naxos, it is reported, that they ran wild and frantic about the woods, with each a torch, or thyrsus, in her hand, singing the praises of Bacchus. Depends on fortune: she exalts the low, And casts the mighty down: the fate of men 1045 Can never be foretold. There was a time. When Creon lived in envied happiness; Ruled o'er renowned Thebes, which from her foes He had deliver'd, with successful power : Bless'd in his kingdom, in his children bless'd, 1050 He stretch'd o'er all his universal sway:— Now all is gone: when pleasure is no more Man then is but an animated corse, Nor can be said to live: he may be rich. Or deck'd with regal honours: but if joy 1055 Be absent from him, if he tastes them not, 'Tis useless grandeur all, and empty shade. Сно. Touching our royal master, bring'st thou

news

Of sorrow to us?

They are dead; and those Who live, the dreadful cause.

Quick, tell us who 1060

The slayer and the slain.

MES. Hæmon is dead.

Сно. Dead! by what hand, his father's or his own? MES. Enraged, and grieving for his murder'd love, He slew himself!

O prophet! thy predictions Сио.

Were but too true.

Since thus it be, 'tis fit We should consult: our present state demands it. CHO. But see, Eurydice, the wretched wife Of Creon, comes this way: or chance hath brought her. Or Hæmon's hapless fate hath reach'd her ear.

Enter EURYDICE.

Eur. O citizens! as to Minerva's fane 1070 Ev'n now I went to pay my vows, the doors I burst, and heard imperfectly the sound Of most disastrous news, which touch'd me near: Breathless I fell amid the virgin throng,

And now I come to know the dreadful truth. 1075 Whate'er it be, I'll hear it now; for, O!

I am no stranger to calamity.

MES. Then mark, my mistress! I will tell thee all, Nor will I pass a circumstance unmention'd. Should I deceive thee with an idle tale. 'Twere soon discover'd; truth is always best: Know, then, I follow'd Creon to the field, Where, torn by dogs, the wretched carcass lay Of Polynices: first to Proserpine And angry Pluto, to appease their wrath, 1085 Our humble prayers addressing, there we laved In the pure stream the body; then with leaves Fresh gather'd covering, burned his poor remains, And on the neighbouring turf a tomb upraised; Then towards the virgin's rocky cave advanced. 1090 When, from the dreadful chamber a sad cry, As from afar, was heard: a servant ran To tell the king; and still, as we approach'd, The sound of sorrow, from a voice unknown 1095 And undistinguish'd, issued forth. "Alas!" Said Creon, "am I then a faithful prophet? And do I tread a more unhappy path Than e'er I went before! It is my son: I know his voice: but get ye to the door, My servants, close; look through the stony heap; Mark if it be so. Is it Hæmon's voice?" Again he cried; "or have the gods deceived me?" Thus spoke the king: we, to our mournful lord Obedient, look'd, and saw Antigone Down in the deepest hollow of the cave 1105 By her own vestments hung: close by her side The wretched youth, embracing in his arms Her lifeless corse, weeping his father's crime, His ravish'd bride, and horrid nuptial bed. Creon beheld, and loud, approaching, cried; — 1110. 'What art thou doing! What's thy dreadful purpose! What means my son? come forth, my Hæmon, come; Thy father begs thee." With indignant eye,

The youth look'd up, nor scornful deign'd an answer,.
But silent drew his sword, and with fell rage
Struck at his father, who by flight escaped
The blow; then on himself bent all his wrath:
Full in his side the weapon fix'd; but still,
While life remain'd, on the soft bosom hung
Of the dear maid, and his last spirit breathed
O'er her pale cheek, discolor'd with his blood.
Thus lie the wretched pair, in death united,
And celebrate their nuptials in the tomb;
To future times a terrible example
Of the sad woes which rashness ever brings.

[Exit Eurydice. Cho. What can this mean? She's gone, without a word.

Mrs. 'Tis strange! and yet I trust she will not loud

Proclaim her griefs to all; but (for I know She's ever prudent), with her virgin train, In secret weep her murder'd Hamon's fate

In secret weep her murder'd Hæmon's fate. 1130 Cho. Clamour, indeed were vain; but such deep

silence

Doth ever threaten horrid consequence.

MES. Within we soon shall know, if aught she hide

Of deadly purport in her angry soul: 1134

For well thou say'st her silence is most dreadful.

[Exit Messenger.

Cho. But, lo! the king himself; and in his arms See his dead son, the monument accursed Of his sad fate, which, may we say unblamed, Sprang not from other's guilt, but from his own.

Enter CREON, bearing the body of Hæmon.

CRE. Ah me! what deadly woes from the bad mind

1140

Perpetual flow! thus in one wretched house

Have you beheld the slayer and the slain.

O fatal counsels! O unhappy son!

Thus with thy youthful bride to sink in death!
Thou diest, my child; and I alone have killed thee!
Cho. O king! thy justice comes too late.
Cho. It doth: 1148
I know it well, unhappy as I am:
For, O! the god this heavy weight of wo
Hath cast upon me, and his fiercest wrath
Torments me now, changing my joyful state
To keenest anguish. O! the fruitless toils
Of wretched mortals!

Enter Messenger.

Mrs. Thus oppress'd, my lord,
With bitterest misfortune, more affliction
Awaits thee still, which thou wilt find within.
Car. And can there be more woes? Is aught to
come 1155
More horrible than this?

MES. The queen is dead, Her wounds yet fresh: eager, alas! to show A mother's love, she follow'd her lost child.

CRE. O Death insatiate! how dost thou afflict me! What cruel news, thou messenger of ill! 1160 Hast thou brought now?

CHO. A wretch already dead With grief, thy horrid tale once more hath slain. Cas. Didst thou not say a fresh calamity

Had fallen upon me? Didst not say my wife Was dead, alas! for grief of Hæmon's fate! 1165

[Scene opens, and discovers the body of Eurydice. MES. Behold her there.

CRE. O me! another blow!
What now remains? What can I suffer more,
Thus bearing in these arms my breathless son?
My wife too dead! O most unhappy mother!
And O, thou wretched child!

Mes. Close by the altar 1170
She drew the sword, and closed her eyes in death,
Sopp.—R

Lamenting first her lost Megareus' fate
And Hæmon's death, with imprecations dire
Still poured on thee, the murderer of thy son.
CRE. I shudder at it. Will no friendly hand 1175
Destroy ma quick! for, O! I am most wretched;
Beset with miseries!

Mss. She accused thee oft,
And said the guilt of both their deaths was thine.
Cre. Alas! I only am to blame; 'twas I
Who kill'd thee, Hæmon! I confess my crime. 1180
Bear me, my servants! bear me far from hence,
For I am—nothing.

CHO. If in ills like these
Aught can be well, thou hast determined right:
When least we see our woes, we feel them least.

CRE. Quick let my last, my happiest hour appear: Would it were come, the period of my woes! 1186 that I might not see another day!

CHO. Time must determine that: the present hour Demands our care; the rest be left to Heaven.

CRE. But I have wish'd and pray'd for 't. Сно. Pray for nothing; 1190

There's no reversing the decrees of fate.

Cre. Take hence this useless load, this guilty wretch

Who slew his child, who slew ev'n thee, my wife! I know not whither to betake me, where
To turn my eyes; for all is dreadful round me, 1195
And fate hath weighed me down on every side.

Cho. Wisdom alone is man's true happiness.
We are not to dispute the will of heaven;
For ever are the boastings of the proud
By the just gods repaid, and man at last
1200
Is taught to fear their anger and be wise.

1172 Megareus was the first husband of Eurydica.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

HERCULES.
HYLLUS, his son.
DEJANIRA, wife of Hercules.
LICHAS, a herald.
ATTENDANT on Dejanira.
NURSE.
OLD MAN.
MESSENGER.
CHORUS, composed of virgins of Trachis.

TRACHINIÆ.

ARGUMENT.

LOLE, the daughter of Eurytus, king of Œchalia, was sought in marriage by Hercules, who, in revenge for the rejection of his addresses, killed her brother Iphitus. Hercules shortly after became a successful suitor of Dejanira, and married her. Being compelled to seek a temporary shelter in Trachis, he committed the custody of his wife to Ceyx, the king of that country, and made an incursion into Œchalia. Iole now fell into the hands of her former lover, whose affection met with reciprocal tenderness; and Dejanira, secretly informed of her husband's attachment to her more fortunate rival, sent, by the hands of Lichas, a poisoned tunic, which she had formerly received as a philtre from the centaur Nessus, when expiring; and which he then told her had the power of recalling an inconstant man from the temptations of unlawful love. The unfortunate hero, attired in this fatal garment, soon became sensible of his approaching end; and in his rage threw Lichas into the sea; after which he directed his son Hyllus to convey him immediately to Mount Œta, and to burn him on a funeral pile to be there erected; while Dejanira, in despair for the mischief she had caused, destroyed herself.

ACT I.

Scene before the palace of Ceyx, in Trachis.

DEJANIRA, ATTENDANT.

Dr.J. OF ancient fame, and long for truth received, Hath been the maxim, that nor good nor ill Can mortal life be called before we die.

Alas! it is not so; for, O my friends!

R 2

Ere to the shades of Orcus I descend, Too well I know that Dejanira's life Hath ever boen, and ever must be wretched. While, in my native Pleuron, Œneus watch'd My tender years with kind, paternal care, If ever woman suffer'd from the dread 10 Of hated nuptials, I endured the worst. And bitterest woes, when Achelous came, The river-god, to ask a father's voice, And snatched me to his arms. With triple form He came affrighting; now, to sight appear'd 15 A bull; and now, with motley scales adorn'd, A wreathed serpent; now with human shape And bestial head united: from his beard, Shadow'd with hair, as from a fountain dripp'd The overflowing water; horrid form! 90 This to escape, my prayers incessant rose, That I might rather die than e'er approach His hated bed; when, lo! the welcome hour, Though late, arrived that brought the son of Jove And fair Alcmena to my aid: he came, He fought, he freed me. How the battle pass'd, Who unconcern'd beheld it best can tell: Alas! I saw it not, oppress'd with fear. Lest from my fatal beauty should arise Some sad event: at length, deciding Jove 30 Gave to the doubtful fight a happy end, If I may call it so; for, since the hour That gave me to Alcides' wish'd-for bed, Fears rise on fears; still is my anxious heart Solicitous for him: ofttimes the night, 35 Which brings him to me, bears him from my arms To other labours, and a second toil. Our children, too, alas! he sees them not,

⁸ A city of Ætolia, and the residence of Œneus, king of that country, and father of Dejanira.

¹² A fa:nous river, arising out of Mount Pindus, and dividing Ætolia from Acarnania. The fabulous account of his person and powers is received by the ancient poets, and explained by the mythologists.

But as the husbandman, who ne'er beholds His distant lands, save at the needful time Of seed or harvest. Wandering thus, and three Returning ever, is he sent to serve I know not whom: when crown'd with victory, Then most my fears prevail: for since he slew The valiant Iphitus, at Trachis here We live in exile with our generous friend. The hospitable Ceyx; he, meantime, Is gone, and none can tell me where: he went. And left me most unhappy. O! some ill Hath sure befallen him! for no little time 50 Hath he been absent: 'tis full fifteen moons Since I beheld him, and no messenger Is come to Dejanira: some misfortune Doubtless hath happen'd, for he left behind A dreadful scroll. O! I have pray'd the gods 55 A thousand times it may contain no ill. ATT. My royal mistress, long have I beheld Thy tears and sorrows for thy lost Alcides: But if the counsels of a slave might claim Attention, I would speak, would ask thee wherefore, Among thy sons, a numerous progeny, None hath been sent in search of him, and chief Thy Hyllus, if he holds a father's health And safety dear: but, ev'n as we could wish, 65 Behold him here: if what I have advised Seem fitting, he is come in happiest hour To execute our purpose.

Enter HYLLUS.

Or, my son!
Of from the meanest tongue the words of truth
And safety flow: this woman, though a slave, 69
Hath spoke what would have well become the mouth
Of freedom's self to utter.

45 Iphitus was the son of Eurytus, king of Œchalia, and was slain by Hercules; who, as an expiation for the crime, submitted to a voluntary exile at Trachis, under the protection of Ceyx, the king of that country.

Hyr.	May I know	•
What she hath said?	ha annua it dath madaak	
DEJ. Sl Disgrace on thee, thy fa	he says, it doth reflect	
Not to have gain'd some		
Hyl. I have already,	if I may rely	75
On what report hath sai		"
Dr.J.	O! where,	
Where is he then, my se	on ¹	
HyL.	These twelve months pa	ast.
If fame say true, a Lydi	ian woman held him	,
In shameful servitude.		
Dej.	If it be so,	
May every tongue repro		
Η̈́νι.	But I hear	80
He now is free.		
Dej. And w	here doth rumour say	
He is? Alive or dead?		
HyL.	'Tis said, he leads,	
Or means to lead, his fo	rces towards Eubœa,	
The land of Eurytus.		
	Alas, my son!	
Dost thou not know the		85
Touching that kingdom		
Hyl.	No, I know not of then	a:
What were they?		
	e, he said, or he should d	ie,
Or if he should survive,	his life to come	
Would all be happy. V	vilt thou not, my son!	
In this important crisis,	strive to aid	90
Thy father! If he lives	, we too snall live	
In safety; if he dies, we	e perish with him. long since I had be en th e	
But that the oracle did i	long since I had been the	:г е ,
Mine ears before; mean		95
Which on my father eve		00
Propitious, should not s		
Thus far informed, I wil		
Of truth escape me, but		
	** con 10.10 TF 10 than	

105

DEJ. Haste then away, my son, and know, good deeds, 100

Though late perform'd, are crown'd with sure success. [Exit Hyllus.

Enter CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

On thee we call, great god of day!

To whom the night, with all her starry train,

Yields her solitary reign,

Tields her sontary reign,
To send us some propitious ray:
Say thou, whose all-beholding eyé
Doth nature's every part descry,
What dangerous ocean, or what land unknown
From Dejanira keeps Alcmena's valiant son?

ANTISTROPHE I.

For she nor joy nor comfort knows,
But weeps her absent lord, and vainly tries
To close her ever-streaming eyes,
Or sooth her sorrows to repose:
Like the sad bird of night, alone
She makes her solitary moan;
And still, as on her widow'd bed reclined
She lies, unnumber'd fears perplex her anxious mind.

Ev'n as the troubled billows roar,
When angry Boreas rules the inclement skies,
And waves on waves tumultuous rise
To lash the Cretan shore;—

120

Thus, sorrows still on sorrows press'd,
Fill the great Alcides' breast.
Unfading yet shall his fair virtues bloom,
And some protecting god preserve him from the tomb.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Wherefore, to better thoughts inclined,
Let us with hope's fair prospect fill thy breast,
Calm thy anxious thoughts to rest,
And ease thy troubled mind.

No bliss on man unmix'd with wo,
Doth Jove, great lord of all, bestow;
But good with ill, and pleasure still with pain,
Like heaven's revolving signs alternate reign.

EPODE.

Not always do the shades of night remain, Nor ever with hard fate is man oppress'd; The wealth that leaves us may return again; Sorrow and joy successive fill the breast:

Fearless then of every ill.

Let cheerful hope support thee still. Remember, queen! there is a power above; And when did the great father, careful Jove, Forget his children dear, and kind paternal love DEJ. The fame, it seems, of Dejanira's woes Hath reach'd thine ears; but, O! thou little know What I have suffer'd; thou hast never felt Sorrows like mine; and long may be the time Ere sad experience shall afflict thy soul With equal woes! Alas! the youthful maid In flowery pastures still exulting feeds, Nor feels the scorching sun, the wintry storm. Or blast of angry winds: secure she leads A life of pleasure, void of every care, Till to the virgin's happy state succeeds The name of wife: then shall her portion come Of pain and anguish; then her terrors rise For husband and for children; then, perchance, You too may know what 'tis to be unhappy, And judge of my misfortunes by your own. Long since, oppress'd by many a bitter wo, Oft have I wept; but this transcends them all; For I will tell thee, when Alcides last Forth on his journey went, he left behind An ancient scroll. Alas! before that time In all his labours he did never use

To speak as one who thought of death; secure Always he seem'd of victory: but now This writing marks as if he were to die. The portion but reserved for me, and wills
His children to divide the inheritance;
Fixes the time, in fifteen moons, it says,
He should return; that past, or he must perish;
Or, if he 'scape the fatal hour, thenceforth
Should lead a life of happiness and joy.
Thus had the gods, it said, decreed his life
And toil should end; so from their ancient beech
Dodona's doves foretold. The appointed hour 176
Approaches that must bring the event, ev'n now,
My friends; and therefore nightly do I start
From my sweet slumbers, struck with deadly fear,
Lest I should lose the dearest, best of men. 180

Cno. Of better omen be thy words: behold A messenger who bears (for on his brow I see the laurel crown) some joyful news.

Enter Messenger.

Mrs. I come, my royal mistress, to remove
Thy fears, and bring the first glad tidings to thee;
To tell thee that Alemena's son returns
With life and victory: ev'n now he comes
To lay before his country's gods the spoils
Of glorious war.

Drs. What dost thou say, old man?

What dost thou tell me?

Mes. That thy dear Alcides,
Thy valiant lord, with his victorious bands, 191
Will soon attend thee.

DEJ. From our citizens
Didst thou learn this, or from a stranger's tongue?

MES. The herald Lichas, in yon flowery vale,
But now reported; and I fled impatient,
Soon as I heard it, that I first might tell thee,
And be rewarded for the welcome tale.

¹⁷⁶ At Dodona, a city of Chaonia in Epirus, was a temple dedicated to Jupiter Dodoneus; and in a grove near it a beechtree, on which two doves set and prophesied.

DEJ. But wherefore tarries Lichas if he bring Glad tidings to me? 'Tis impossible To reach thee, for the Melian people throng 200 Around him; not a man but longs to know Some news of thy Alcides, stops his journey, Nor will release him till he hear it all: Spite of himself, he waits to satisfy Their eager doubts: but thou wilt see him soon. 205 DEJ. O, thou, who dwell'st on Œta's sacred top! Immortal Jove! at length, though late, thou givest The wish'd-for boon: let every female now— You that within the palace do reside, And you, my followers here, with shouts proclaim The bless'd event: for, lo! a beam of joy 211 I little hoped, breaks forth, and we are happy. CHORUS. STROPHE.

Quick let sounds of mirth and joy
Every cheerful hour employ:
Haste, and join the festive song,
You who lead the youthful throng;
On whom the smiles of prosperous fate,
And Hymen's promised pleasures wait.
Now all your Io Pæans sing,
To Phæbus, your protector and your king.
Antistrophe.
And you, ye virgin train, attend,
Not unmindful of your friend.

225

His sister huntress of the groves,
Who still her native Delos loves.
Prepare the dance and choral lays,
To hymn the chaste Diana's praise;
To her and her attendant choir
Of mountain nymphs, attune the votive lyre.
EPODE.

Already hath the god possess'd My soul, and rules the sovereign of my breast. 230

Evoe, Bacchus! lo! I come to join
Thy throng; around me doth the thyrsus twine,
And I am fill'd with rage divine.
See! the glad messenger appears,
To calm thy doubts, and to remove thy fears.
Let us our Io Pæans sing
To Phæbus, our protector and our king.
[Exeunt.

ACT II.

DEJANIRA, CHORUS.

DEJ. THESE eyes deceive me, friends, or I behold A crowd approach this way, and with them comes The herald Lichas: let me welcome him, 240 If he bring joyful news.

Enter Lichas, Iole, Slaves.

Li. My royal mistress,
We greet thee with fair tidings of success,
And therefore shall our words deserve thy praise.
Dej. O thou dear messenger! inform me first
What first I wish to know: my loved Alcides,— 246
Both he yet live! Shall I again behold him?
Li. I left him well; in health and manly strength
Exulting.

DEJ. Where! In his own native land, Or 'mid barbarians!

LI. On Eubœa's shore

He waits, with various fruits to crown the altar,

And pay due honours to Cenæan Jove. 251

DEJ. Commanded by some oracle divine

Performs he this, or means but to fulfil A vow of gratitude for conquest gain'd!

Li. For victory o'er the land, whence we have brought 255

These captive women, whom thou seest before thee.

251 So called from Censum, a promontery in Euloss, where alters were raised to Jupiter, and sacrifice offered up to him.

DEL. Whence come the wretched slaves ! for, if I judge

Their state aright, they must indeed be wretched. Lt. Know, when Alcides had laid waste the city Of Eurytus, to him and to the gods 260 Were these devoted.

Dej. In Œchalia, then,
Hath my Alcides been this long, long time?
Li. Not so: in Lydia (as himself reports)
Was he detain'd a slave; so Jove ordain'd,
And who shall blame the high decrees of Jove? 265
Sold to barbarian Omphale, he served
Twelve tedious months: ill-brook'd he the foul
shame:

Then in his wrath he made a solemn vow

He would revenge the wrong on the base author,
And bind in chains his wife and all his race;
Nor fruitless the resolve; for when the year
Of slavery past had expiated the crime
Imputed, soon with gather'd force he march'd
'Gainst the devoted Eurytus, the cause
(For so he deem'd him) of those hateful bonds.
Within his palace he had erst received
Alcides, but with bitterest taunts reviled him,
Boasting, in spite of his all-conquering arrows,
His son's superior skill; and said, a slave
279
Like him should bend beneath a freeman's power:
Then, 'mid the banquet's mirth, inflamed with
wine.

Cast forth his ancient guest. This to revenge,
When Iphitus to search his pastured steeds
Came to Tirynthia, Hercules surprised;
And, as he turn'd his wandering eyes aside,
Hurl'd headlong from the mountain's top.

Great
Jove,

Father of men, from high Olympus saw And disapproved the deed, unworthy of him, Who ne'er before by fraud destroy'd his foes. With open force had he revenged the wrong, 290 Jove had forgiven; but violence conceal'd The gods abhor, and therefore was he sold To slavery; Eurytus' unhappy sons Were punish'd too, and dwell in Erebus; Their city is destroyed; and they, whom here 295 Thou seest, from freedom and prosperity Reduced to wretchedness: to thee they come, Such was Alcides' will; which I, his slave, Have faithfully perform'd. Himself, ere long, Thou shalt behold, when to paternal Jove 300 Thus my long tale He hath fulfilled his vows. Ends with the welcomest news which thou couldst hear:

Alcides comes!

Cho. O queen! thy happiness
Is great indeed, to see these slaves before thee,
And know thy lord approaches.

I am happy: 305 To see my Hercules with victory crown'd, "Tis fit I should rejoice; and yet, my friends If we consider well, we still should fear For the successful, lest they fall from bliss. It moves my pity much when I behold 310 These wretched captives in a foreign land, Without a parent, and without a home, Thus doom'd to slavery here, who once, perhaps, Enjoy'd fair freedom's best inheritance. O Jove? averter of each mortal ill! 315 Let not my children ever feel thy arm Thus raised against them; or, if 'tis decreed, Let it not be while Dejanira lives. The sight of these alarms my fears; but tell me, Thou poor afflicted captive, who thou art. to Iole. Art thou a mother? or, as by thy years 321 Thou seem'st, a virgin, and of noble birth? Canst thou not tell me, Lichas, whence she sprang? Inform me: for, of all these slaves, she most

Hath won my pity; and in her alone 325 Have I observed a firm and generous mind. Li. Why ask of me! I know not who she is: Perhaps of no mean rank. Der. The royal race Of Eurytus! Lı. I know not, nor did e'er Inquire. And didst thou never hear her name 330 From her companions? Never: I perform'd My work in silence. DEJ. Tell me then thyself. Thou wretched maid! for I am most unhappy Till I know who thou art. She will not speak: I know she will not: not a word hath pass'd 335 Her lips e'er since she lest her native land; But still in tears the hapless virgin mourns The burden of her sad calamity. Her fate is hard: she merits your forgiveness. Deg. Let her go in; I'll not disturb her peace, Nor would I heap fresh sorrows on her head; 341 She hath enough already: we'll retire. [to Iole.

Go where thou wilt; my cares within await me. [Exeunt Lichas, Iole, and Slaves.

Enter MESSENGER.

MES. Stay thee awhile. I have a tale to tell Touching these captives, which imports thee nearly; And I alone am able to inform thee. 346

DEJ. What dost thou know? and why wouldst thou detain me?

Mrs. Return, and hear me: when I spake before, I did not speak in vain, nor shall I now.

Des. Wouldst thou I call them back, or mean'st to tell 350

Thy secret purpose here to me alone?

Mes. To these and thee thy friends; no more.

Dej. They're gone; Now speak in safety. Lichas is dishonest: And, either now or when I saw him last, Hath utter'd falsehood. Ha! what dost thou say? 355 I understand thee not; explain it quickly. MES. I heard him say, before attendant crowds. It was this virgin, this fair slave, destroyed Œchalia's lofty towers: 'twas love alone That waged the war, no Lydian servitude. 360 Nor Omphale, nor the pretended fall Of Iphitus, for so the tale he brings Would fain persuade thee. Know, thy own Alcides, For that he could not gain the assenting voice 365 Of Eurytus to his unlawful love, Laid waste the city where her father reign'd, And slew him: now the daughter, as a slave, Is sent to thee; the reason is too plain. Nor think he meant her for a slave alone,— The maid he loves, that would be strange indeed. My roval mistress! most unwillingly 371 Do I report the unwelcome news, but thought It was my duty; I have told the truth. And the Trachinians bear me witness of it. DEJ. Wretch that I am! to what am I reserved? 376 What hidden pestilence within my roof Have I received unknowing! Hapless woman! She seem'd of beauteous form and noble birth: Have you not heard her name? for Lichas said He knew it not. MES. Daughter of Eurytus, 380 Her name Iole: he had not inquired Touching her race. Perdition on the man. Сно. Of all most wicked, who hath thus deceived thee!

ful news
Afflicts me sorely.

DEJ. What's to be done, my friend? This dread-

Der.

The fraud is thine.

Go, and learn the whole 385 From his own lips; compel him to declare The truth. Dej. I will: thou counsell'st me aright. Cно. Shall we attend you? Des. No; for see, he comes Uncall'd. Enter Lichas, Attendant. O queen! what are thy last commands To thy Alcides! for ev'n now I go 290 To meet him. DeJ. Hast thou taken so long a journey To Trachis, and wouldst now so soon return. Ere I can hold some further converse with thee! Lr. If thou wouldst question me of aught, behold me Ready to tell thee. DEJ. Wilt thou tell me truth ! Li. In all I know: so bear me witness, Jove! Day. Who is that woman thou hast brought? She's of Eubœa: for her race and name, I know them not. Look on me: who am I! DEJ. Lt. Why ask me this? Dej. Be bold, and answer me. 400 Li. Daughter of Œneus, wife of Hercules: If I am not deceived, 'tis Dejanira. My queen, my mistress. Am I so indeed? Am I thy mistress? Lı. Doubtless. Why, 'tis well Thou dost confess it: then what punishment Wouldst thou deserve, if thou wert faithless to her! Li. How faithless! Mean'st thou to betray me?

No:

L1. 'Twas folly thus to stay
And hear thee: I must hence.
Des. Thou shalt not go
Till I have ask'd thee one short question.
Lr. Ask it, 410
For so it seems thou art resolved.
Dej. Inform me;
This captive—dost thou know her?
Li. I have told thee:
What wouldst thou more!
DES. Didst thou not say this slave,
Though now it seems thou know'st her not, was daughter
Of Eurytus, her name Iole!
Lt. Where ! 415
To whom did I say this? What witness have you?
Des. Assembled multitudes: the citizens
Of Trachis heard thee.
Li. They might say they heard
Reports like these; but must it therefore seem
A truth undoubted?
Drs. Seem! Didst thou not swear 490
That thou hadst brought this woman to partake
The bed of my Alcides !
Li. Did I say so !
But tell me who this stranger is.
DEJ. The man
Who heard thee say Alcides' love for her, And not the Lydian, laid the city waste.
And not the Lydian, laid the city waste. 425
La. Let him come forth, and prove it: 'tis no mark
Of wisdom thus to trifle with the unhappy.
DEJ. O! do not, I beseech thee, by that Power
Whose thunders roll o'er Œta's lofty grove,
Do not conceal the truth. Thou speak'st to one
Not unexperienced in the ways of men; 431
To one who knows we cannot always joy
In the same object: 'tis an idle task
To take up arms against all-powerful love.
Love, which commands the gods, love conquer'd me,

And wherefore should it not subdue another. Whose nature and whose passions are the same? If my Alcides is indeed oppress'd With this sad malady, I blame him not: That were a folly: nor this hapless maid. 440 Who meant no ill, no injury to me. 'Tis not for this I speak; but mark me well: If thou wert taught by him to utter falsehood. A vile and shameful lesson didst thou learn: And if thou art thy own instructer, know, Thou shalt seem wicked ev'n when most sincere. And never be believed: speak then the truth; For to be branded with the name of liar Is ignominy fit for slaves alone, And not for thee. Nor think thou canst conceal it: Those who have heard the tale will tell it me. If fear deter thee, thou hast little cause; For to suspect his falsehood is my grief; To know it, none: already have I seen Alcides' heart estranged to other loves. 455 Yet did no rival ever hear from me One bitter word, nor will I now reproach This wretched slave, ev'n though she pines for him With strongest love. Alas! I pity her, Whose beauty thus has been the fatal cause 460 Of all her misery; laid her country waste, And brought her here, far from her native land, A helpless captive: but no more of this; Only remember, if thou must be false, Be false to others, but be true to me. 465 Cно. She speaks most kindly to thee; be persuaded: Hereafter thou shalt find her not ungrateful. We too will thank thee. O, my dearest mistress! Not unexperienced thou in human life, Nor ignorant; and therefore naught from thee 470 Will I conceal, but tell thee all the truth.

Tis as he said; and Hercules, indeed,

Doth love Iole: for her sake alone,
Œchalia, her unhappy country, fell;
This (for 'tis fit I tell thee) he confess'd, 475
Nor will'd me to conceal it; but I fear'd
'Twould pierce thy heart to hear the unwelcome
tale,
And therefore own I would have kept it from thee.
That crime, if such it was, I have committed:
But since thou know'st it all, let me entreat thee,
For her sake and thy own, O! do not hate 481
This wretched captive; but remember well,
What thou hast promised faithfully perform.
He whose victorious arm hath conquered all,
Now yields to her, and is a slave to love. 485
Dr. 'Tis my resolve to act as thou advisest.
I'll not resist the gods, nor add fresh weight
To my calamity: let us go in,
That thou mayst bear my orders to Alcides,
And, with them, gifts, in kind return for those 490
We have received from him. Thou must not hence
With empty hand, who hither brought'st to me
Such noble presents, and so fair a train. [Excunt.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

495
500
505

ANTISTROPHE.

In dreadful majesty array'd, Affrighting sore the fearful maid. Up rose the horned monarch of the flood: He, who through fair Ætolia's plain 510 Pours his rich tribute to the main: A bull's tremendous form belied the god. From his own Thebes, to win her love, With him the happier son of Jove, The great Alcides came, and in his hand The club, the bow, and glittering spear; 515 While Venus, to her votaries near, Waved o'er their heads her all-deciding wand. EPODE. Warm, and more warm the conflict grows: Dire was the noise of rattling bows. Of front to front opposed, and hand to hand: 520 Deep was the animated strife For love, for conquest, and for life; Alternate groans re-echoed through the land: While pensive on the distant shore, She heard the doubtful battle roar, 525 Many a sad tear the hapless virgin shed; Far from her tender mother's arms, She knows not yet for whom her charms

[Exeunt.

ACT III.

She keeps, or who shall share her bridal bed.

DEJANIRA, CHORUS.

Des. My guest, in pity to the captive train
Laments their woes, and takes his kind farewell:
Meantime, my friends, in secret came I here
To pour forth all my miseries, and impart
To you my inmost thoughts, my last resolve.
Alas! within these walls I have received,
Like the poor sailor, an unhappy freight
To sink me down, no virgin, but a wife.

The wife of my Alcides: his loved arms Now must embrace us both: my faithful lord (Faithful and good I thought him) thus rewards 540 My tender cares, and all the tedious toils I suffer'd for him; but I will be calm: For 'tis an evil I have felt before. And yet to live with her! with her to share My husband's bed! what woman could support it? 545 Her youth is stealing onward to its prime. While mine is wither'd; and the eye, which longs To pluck the opening flower, from the dry leaf Will turn aside: her younger charms, I fear, Have conquer'd, and henceforth, in name alone 550 Shall Dejanira be Alcides' wife. But ill do rage and violence become The prudent matron; therefore, mark me well, And hear what I have purposed, to relieve My troubled heart. Within a brazen urn, 555 Conceal'd from every eye, I long have kept That ancient gift which Nessus did bequeath me. : The hoary centaur, who was wont for hire To bear the traveller o'er the rapid flood Of deep Evenus: not with oars or sail 560 He stemm'd the torrent, but with nervous arm Opposed and pass'd it; me, when first a bride. I left my father's hospitable roof With my Alcides, in his arms he bore Athwart the current; half way o'er, he dared 565 To offer violence: I shriek'd aloud: When, lo! the son of Jove, his bow swift bent, Sent forth a shaft, and pierced the monster's breast, Who with his dying voice did thus address me;— "Daughter of Œneus, listen to my words. 570 So shalt thou profit by the last sad journey Which I shall ever go: if in thy hand Thou take the drops out-flowing from the wound This arrow made, dipp'd in the envenom'd blood Of the Lernæan hydra, with that charm 575 Mayst thou subdue the heart of thy Alcides.

Nor shall another ever gain his love."

Mindful of this, my friends (for from that hour
In secret have I kept the precious gift),
Behold a garment dipp'd in the very blood
He gave me: nor did I forget to add
What he enjoin'd, but have prepared it all.
I know no evil arts, nor would I learn them;
For they who practise such are hateful to me:
I only wish the charm may be of power
To win Alcides from this virgin's love,
And bring him back to Dejanira's arms,
If ye shall deem it lawful; but if not,
I'll go no farther.

CHO. Could we be assured
Such is indeed the effect, 'tis well determined.
DEJ. I cannot but believe it; though, as yet,
Experience never hath confirm'd it to me.
CHO. Thou shouldst be certain; thou but seem'st

to know, If thou hast never tried.

Dej.

I'll try it soon;

For see, ev'n now he comes out at the portal.

Let him not know our purpose; if the deed

Be wrong, concealment may prevent reproach:

Therefore be silent.

Enter LICHAS.

Li. Speak thy last commands,
Daughter of Eneus, for already long
Have we delay'd our journey.
Dej. Know, then, Lichas, 600
That while thou communest with thy friends, myself
Have hither brought a garment which I wove
For my Alcides: thou must bear it to him:
Tell him, no mortal must with touch profane
Pollute the sacred gift, nor sun behold it,
Nor holy temple, nor domestic hearth,
Ere at the altar of paternal Jove

Himself shall wear it; 'twas my solemn vow.

620

Whene'er he should return, that, clothed in this,
He to the gods should offer sacrifice:
Bear too, this token; he will know it well.
Away! remember to perform thy office,
But go no farther; so shall double praise,
And favour from us both, reward thy duty.

Lt. If I have aught of skill, by Hermes right 615
Instructed in his art, I will not fail
To bear thy gift, and faithful to report
What thou hast said.

Del. Begone; what here hath pass'd Thou know'st.

Li. I do; and shall bear back the news That all is well.

DEJ. Thou art thyself a witness How kindly I received the guest he sent me.

Li. It fill'd my heart with pleasure to behold it.

Dej. What canst thou tell him more? Alas! I fear
He'll know too well the love I bear to him:
Would I could be as certain he'd return it! [Exempt.

CHORUS.

STROPHE L

You, who on Œta's craggy summit dwell; 626 Or from the rock, whence gushing rivulets flow,

Bathe in the warmer springs below; You who, near the Melian bay.

To golden-shafted Dian hymn the lay, 630
Now haste to string the lyre, and tune the vocal shell.

ANTISTROPHE I.

No mournful theme demands your pensive strain;

611 This token was a seal-ring, which Dejanira sent with the vest, to convince Hercules that it came from her.

615 Hermes or Mercury always appears as messenger of the gods: he therefore naturally presided over mortal messengers, and is properly mentioned by the herald as his patron and instructer.

. 629 The bay of Melis was not far from Trachis, and adjoining to Artemisium: near it was a temple secred to Diane.

SOPW. -T

But such as, kindled by the sacred fire, The Muses might themselves admire. A loud and cheerful song; for see, The son of Jove returns with victory, And richest spoils reward a life of toil and pain. STRPOHE II. Far from his native land he took his way: For twelve long moons, uncertain of his fate, Did we lament his exiled state, What time his anxious wife deplored, With never-ceasing tears, her absent lord: But Mars at last hath closed his long, laborious day. ANTISTROPHE II. Let him from fair Eubœa's isle appear; Let winds and raging seas oppose no more. 645 But waft him to the wish'd-for shore. The anointed yest's persuasive charms

ACT IV.

Soon shall we see the great, the loved Alcides here.

Shall bring him soon to Dejanira's arms.

DEJANIRA, CHORUS. DEJ. Alas, my friends! I fear I've gone too far. Cно. Great queen! in what? Dej. I know not what; but dread 651 Something to come, lest, where I had most hope Of happiness, I meet with bitterest wo. Сно. Mean'st thou thy gift to Hercules ! I do ! Nor would I henceforth counsel those I loved To do a dark and desperate deed like this, Uncertain of the event. Сно. How was it? Speak, If thou canst tell us. O! 'twas wonderful: For you shall hear it: know, then, the white wool Wherein I wrapp'd the anointed vest, untouch'd 669

By any hand, dropp'd self-consumed away. And down the stone, e'en like a liquid, flow'd **Dissolving**; but 'tis fit I tell you all. Whate'er the wounded centaur did enjoin me. Mindful to practise, sacred as the laws 665 On brazen tablets graved, I have perform'd. Far from the fire, and from the sun's warm beams, He bade me keep the charm from every eye In secret hid, till time should call on me To anoint and use it: this was done: and now. 670 The fleece in sacred pluck'd, the charm prepared, Long from the sun within a chest conceal'd. At length I brought it forth, and sent the gift To my Alcides; when, behold! a wonder, Most strange for tongue to tell, or heart of man 675 Ev'n to conceive! Perchance the wool I cast Into the sunshine: soon as it grew warm, It fell to dust, consuming all away In most strange manner; then from the earth up rose In frothy bubbles, ev'n as from the grape, 680 In yellow autumn, flows the purple wine. I know not what to think; but much I fear I've done a horrid deed: for, why, my friends! Why should the dying savage wish to serve His murderer? That could never be: O no; 685 He only meant by flattery to destroy Me, his destroyer: truth is come too late, And I alone have slain my dear Alcides. I know that by his arrows Chiron fell; I know, whate'er they touch'd, they still were fatal; That very poison mingled with the blood 691 Of dying Nessus; will not that too kill My Hercules! It must; but if he dies, My resolution is to perish with him. Those, who their honour and their virtue prize, 695 Can never live with infamy and shame. Сно. Tis fit we tremble at a deed of horror:

389 Chiron was one of the centaurs, and was wounded by Hercules with one of his arrows dipped in the blood of the bylan.

But 'tis not fitting, ere we know the event, To give up hope, and yield us to despair.

DEF. There is no hope where evil counsel's taken.
CHO. But when we err from ignorance alone, 761
Small is the crime, and slight the punishment:
Such is thy fault.

Des. The guiltless may talk thus,
Who know no ill: not those who are unhappy.
Cho. No more, unless thou mean'st thy son should hear thee, 705:

Who now returns in search of thy Alcides. Behold him here.

Enter Hyllus.

Hyl. O! would that thou wert dead! Would I were not thy son! or, being so, Would I could change thy wicked heart!

DEJ. My son!

What means this passion?

Hyl. Thou hast slain thy husband; 710 This very day my father hast thou slain.

DEJ. Alas! my child, what say'st thou!

Hyl. What is past, And therefore must be: who can e'er undo

The deed that's done !

DEJ. But who could say I did it?
HYL. I saw it with these eyes; I heard it all 715
From his own lips,

DEJ. Where didst thou see him then?

Tell me, O! quickly tell me.

Hyl. If I must,
Observe me well: when Hercules, return'd
From conquest, had laid waste the noble city
Of Eurytus, with fair triumphal spoils
He to Euboa came, where, o'er the sea,
Which beats on every side, Cenœum's top
Hangs dreadful: thither (to paternal Jove)
His new-raised altars in the leafy wood
He came to visit; there did my glad eyes
Behold Alcides first. As he prepared

The frequent victim, from the palace came Lichas thy messenger, and with him brought The fatal gift: wrapp'd in the deadly garment (For such was thy command), twelve oxen then, 730 Without a blemish, firstlings of the spoil, **He slew**: together next a hundred fell. The mingled flock: pleased with his gaudy vest, And happy in it, he awhile remain'd, 735 Offering with joy his grateful sacrifice: But, lo! when from the holy victim rose The bloody flame, and from the pitchy wood Exhaled its moisture, sudden a cold sweat Bedew'd his limbs, and to his body stuck (As by the hand of some artificer 740 Close join'd to every part) the fatal vest. Convulsion rack'd his bones, and through his voins, Like the fell serpent's deadly venom, raged. Then question'd he the wretched, guiltless Lichas, By what detested arts he had procured 745 The poison'd garb: he, ignorant of all, Could only say it was the gift he brought From Dejanira: when Alcides heard it, Tortured with pain, he took him by the foot, And hurl'd him headlong on a pointed rock 750 That o'er the ocean hung: his brains, dash'd forth, With mingled blood flow'd through his clotted hair In horrid streams. The multitude, with shricks, Lamented loud the fury of Alcides. And Lichas' hapless fate: none durst oppose 755 · His raging phrensy; prostrate on the earth Now would he lie and groan; and now, uprising, Would bellow forth his griefs. The mountain tops Of Locris, and Eubœa's rocks return'd His dreadful cries: then, on the ground outstretch'd, In bitterest wrath he cursed the nuptial bed Of Ceneus, and his execrations pour'd On thee, his worst of fees: at length his eves. Distorted forth from the surrounding smoke, 765 He cast on me, who mid attending crowds

2 T

Went his sad fate. "Approach," he cried, "my son! Do not foreake thy father; rather come, And share his fate, than leave me here. O! haste. And take me hence; bear me where never eye Of mortal shall behold me. O, my child! Let me not perish here." Thus spake my father. And I obeyed: distracted with his pains. A vessel brings him to this place, and soon. Living or dead, you will behold him here. This have thy horrid machinations done 775 For thy Alcides. O! may Justice doom thee To righteous punishment, if it be lawful For me to call down vengeance on a mother, As sure it is, on one who hath disclaim'd All piety like thee. The earth sustains not 780 A better man than he whom thou hast murder'd. Nor shalt thou e'er behold his like again.

Exit Dejanira. Cno. Whence this abrupt departure! Know'st thou not.

To go in silence thus confirms thy guilt? Hyl. Let her be gone: and may some prosperous gale 785

Wast her far off, that these abhorring eyes May never see her more! What boots the name Of mother, when no longer she performs A mother's duty! Let her go in peace: And, for her kindness to my father, soon 790 May she enjoy the blessings she bestow'd!

CHORUS.

STROPHE 1.

True was the oracle divine. Long since delivered from Dodona's shrine. Which said Alcides' woes should last Till twelve revolving years were past; 796 Then should his labours end in sweet repose. Behold, my friends! 'tis come to pass: 'Tis all fulfill'd; for who, alas!

In peaceful death or toil or slavery knows?

TRACRIMER.—ACT V.	238
ANTISTROPHE L	
If deep within his tortured veins	809
The centaur's cruel poison reigns,	
That from the hydra's baleful breath	
Destructive flow'd, replete with death,	
On him another sun shall never rise:	
The venom runs through every part,	805
And, lo! to Nessus' direful art	
Alcides falls a helpless sacrifice.	
STROPHE II.	
Poor Dejanira long deplored	
Her waning charms, and ever-faithless lord:	
At length, by evil counsel sway'd,	810
Her passion's dictates she obey'd,	010
Resolved Alcides' doubtful truth to prove;	
But now, alas! laments his fate	
In ceaseless wo, and finds too late	
A dying husband and a foreign love.	815
ANTISTROPHE II.	010
Another death must soon succeed.	
Another victim soon shall bleed:	
Fatal, Alcides! was the dart	
That pierced the rival monarch's heart,	,
And brought Iole from her native land.	830
From Venus did our sorrows flow,	
The secret spring of all our wo;	
For naught was done but by her dread comman	d.
{ Es	eunt.
	•
ACT V.	
$[A \ noise within the pactures.$	lace.
Or I'm deceived, or I did hear loud shrieks	
Within the palace; 'twas the voice of one	895
In anguish. Doubtless, some calamity	
Hath fallen upon us now: what can it be?	
Man tanon upon us now . what can it be !	
and the second of the second o	

But see, you matron, with contracted brow And unaccustomed sadness, comes to tell The dreadful news.

Enter NURSE.

Nurse. What woes, my hapless daughters,
Alcides' fatal gift hath brought upon us!

Cho. What dost thou tell us!

Nurse.

Dejanira treads

The last sad path of mortals.

CHO. Is she gone ?

Nusse. Tis so, indeed. Cro. V

CHO. What! dead!

Nurse. Again I say, She is no more.

CHO. Alas! how did she perish? 835
NURSE. Most fearfully: 'twas dreadful to behold.
CHO. How fell she then?

Nurse. By her own hand.

Cho.

What madness, what disorder!

What could move

To perpetrate so terrible a deed, Thus adding death to death!

NURSE. The fatal steel 840

Destroy'd her.

CHO. Didst thou see it?

Nursz. I was by,

Close by her side.
Cho. How was it?

NURSE. Her own arm

Struck the sad blow.

CHO. Indeed! Most veritably

Сно. In evil hour this rival virgin came

To bring destruction here.

Nurse. And so she did: Hadst thou, like me, been witness to the deed,

Thou wouldst much more have pitied her.

Alas! C110. How could a woman do it? 'Twas most dreadful. As thou shalt hear, for I will tell thee all. Soon as she enter'd at the palace gate. 850 And saw her son prepare the funeral bed, To the inmost chamber silent she retired From every eye: there at the altar's feet Falling lamented loud her widow'd state; And ever as she lit on aught her hands 855 Had used in happier days, the tears would flow. From room to room she wander'd; and, if chance A loved domestic cross'd her, she would weep And mourn her fate, for ever now deprived Of converse sweet, and hymeneal joys: 860 Then would she strew her garments on the bed Of her Alcides; for conceal'd I watch'd Her every motion; throw herself upon it; And, as the tears in a warm flood burst forth, "Farewell!" she cried, "for ever farewell now, 865 My nuptial couch! for never shalt thou more Receive this wretched burthen." Thus she spake. And with quick hand the golden button loosed; Then cast her robe aside, her bosom bared, And seemed prepared to strike. I ran and told 870 The dreadful purpose to her son: too late We came, and saw her wounded to the heart. The pious son beheld his bleeding mother. And wept; for well he knew, by anger fired, 875 And the fell centaur's cruel fraud betray'd, Unweeting she had done the dreadful deed. Close to her side he laid him down, and join'd His lips to hers, lamenting sore that thus He had accused her guiltless; then deplored 880 His own sad fate, thus suddenly bereaved Of both his parents: you have heard my tale. Who to himself shall promise length of life?

None but the fool: for, O! to-day alone Is ours; we are not certain of to-morrow.



CHO. Which shall I weep! Which most ou hearts should fill With grief, the present or the future ill, The dving or the dead? 'Tis equal wo, To feel the stroke, or fear the impending blow. STROPHE.

O! for a breeze to waft us o'er. Propitious to some distant shore! To shield our souls from sore affright, And save us from the dreadful sight! That sight the hardest heart would move.-In his last pange the son of Jove:

To see the poison run through every vein, And limbs convulsed with agonizing pain.

ANTISTROPHE.

Behold the attendant train is nigh: I hear the voice of misery. Ev'n as the plaintive nightingale, That warbles sweet her mournful tale: 900 Silent and slow they lead him on. Hark! I hear Alcides groan! Again 'tis silence all! This way they tread: Or sleeps he now, or rests he with the dead !

Enter HERCULES, HYLLUS, ATTENDANTS.

Hyl. Alas, my father! whither shall I go! Wretch that I am! O. where shall I betake me! What will become of thy afflicted son!

ATT. Speak softly, youth! do not awake his pains: Refrain thy grief, for yet Alcides lives, Though verging to the tomb: be calm.

HyL. What say'st thou? 910 Doth he yet live ?

He doth; disturb not thus His slumbers, nor provoke the dire disease. Hyr. Alas! I cannot bear to see him thus.

Hercules awakes. Hen. O Jove! where am I, and with whom! What land

Contains the wretched Hercules, oppress'd 915 With never-ending woes! Ah me! again The deadly poison racks me. ATT. [to Hyllus.] Seest thou not Twere better far to have remain'd in silence, And not awaked him? HyL. 'Twas impossible Unmoved to look on such calamity: 'I could not do it. HER. O Censean rocks. Where smoke the sacred alters! Is it thus. O Jove! thou dost reward my picty! What dreadful punishment is this thy hand Hath laid on me, who never could deserve 995 Such bitter wrath! What incantations now, What power of medicine, can assuage my pain. Unless great Jove assisted! Health to me Without him were a miracle indeed. Let me, O! let me rest; refuse me not 930 A little slumber: why will ye torment me? Why bend me forward! O! 'tis worse than death-Had you not waked me. I had been at peace. Again it rages with redoubled force. Where are you now, ye thankless Greci**ans! where,** Whom I have toil'd to serve on the rough main. 936 And through the pathless wood! Where are ye now. To help the dying wretch! Will no kind hand Stretch forth the friendly sword, or in the flame Consume me! None, alas! will cut me off 7 940 From hated life. O vouth! assist thy father: It is beyond my strength: thy quicker sight May be more useful. Hyt. My poor aid is ready: But wheresoe'er I am, 'tis not in me To expel the subtile poison that destroys him; 945

Such is the will of Jove.

HER. My son! my son!

Where art thou? Bear me up; assist me; O!

Again it comes, the unconquerable iii,	
The dire disease. O Pallas! aid me now:	
Draw forth thy sword, my son! strike, strike thy	fa-
	5 0
And heal the wound thy impious mother made.	
O! could I see her like myself destroy'd,	
I should be happy. Brother of great Jove!	
Sweet Pluto! hear me. O! with speedy death	
Lay me to rest, and bury all my woes.) 55
Сно. The anguish of the unhappy man, my friend	s!
Is terrible: I tremble but to hear him.	
HER. What hath this body suffer'd! O, the toils	,
The labours I endured, the pangs I felt,	
Unutterable woes! but never aught	160
So dreadful as this sore calamity	
Oppress'd Alcides: not the wife of Jove,	
Nor vile Eurystheus could torment me thus,	
As, Œneus! thy deceitful daughter hath.	
O! I am tangled in a cruel net	165
Woven by the Furies; it devours my flesh,	
Dries up my veins, and drinks the vital blood.	
My body's wither'd, and I cannot break	
The indissoluble chain: nor hostile spear,	
Nor earth-born giants, nor the savage herd,	70
The wild barbarian, nor the Grecian host,	
Not all the nations I have journey'd o'er,	
Could do a deed like this: at last I fall,	
Like a poor coward, by a woman's hand,	
	75
Now prove thyself the offspring of Alcides,	
Nor let thy reverence of a mother's name	
Surpass thy duty to an injured father.	
Go, bring her hither, give her to my wrath,	
That I may see whom thou wilt most lament,	80
When thou behold'st my vengeance fall on her.	
Fear not, my son! but go; have pity on me,	
Pity thy father: all must pity me,	
While they behold, ev'n as the tender maid,	
Alcides weep, who never wept before.	186

I bore my sorrows all without a groan; But now thou seest I am a very woman. Come near, my child! O! think what I endure, For I will show thee: look on this poor body: Let all behold it. What a sight is here! O me! again the cruel poison tears My entrails, nor affords a moment's ease. O take me, Pluto! to thy gloomy reign; Father of lightning! mighty Jove! send down Thy bolt, and strike me now! Again it racks. 995 It tortures me. O hands, that once had strength! And you, my sinewy arms! was it by you The terrible Nemæan lion fell, The dreadful hydra, and the lawless race Of centaurs? Did this wither'd hand subdue The Erymanthian boar, wide-wasting plague! **And** from the shades of Orcus drag to light The triple-headed monster? By this arm Did the fierce guardian of the golden fruit In Libva's deserts fall! Unnumbered toils 1005 Have I endured of old, and never vet Did mortal bear a trophy from Alcides: But nerveless now this arm: see from the bone Darts the loose flesh: I waste beneath the power Of this dark pestilence. O Hercules! 1010 Why boast thy mother sprung of noblest race, And vainly call thyself the son of Jove? But mark me well; this creeping shadow still, Poor as it is, shall yet revenge itself 1015 On her who did the execrable deed. Would she were here to feel my wrath; to know And teach mankind that Hercules, though dead, As while he lived, can scourge the guilty still!

⁹⁹⁸ Nemse was a wood near Argia in Peloponnesus, where Hercules also also of prodigious size and fierceness.

1001 Erymanthus was a mountain of Arcadia, where Harcules also a wild boar that infested the country.

Sopu.—U

One. Unhappy Greece! how wilt thou mourn the loss' Of such a man! HYL. Permit me but to speak. 1090 Distemper'd as thou art, my father! hear me: Naught shall I ask unfit for thee to grant. Be calm, and listen to me; yet thou know'st not How groundless thy complaints, and what new joy Awaits thee still. HER. Be brief, then, and inform me: 1025 My pains afflict me so, I cannot guess Thy subtle purpose. 'Twas to speak of her HyL. My mother; 'twas to tell thee of her state. And how unweeting she offended thee. HER. Thou worst of children! wouldst thou then defend 1020 The murder of thy father? darest thou thus Recall the sad remembrance of her crime ! Hyl. It must not be conceal'd: I know too well I can no longer hide it. HER. What! Her guilt! Tis known already. Thou'lt not always think so. 1035 HER. Speak then, but take good heed thou show thvself Worthy thy father. Know then.—she is dead. Hyl. Her. O, dreadful! murder'd? By what hand! Her own. Her. Would she had fallen by mine! Hyl. Alas, my father. Didst thou know all, thy anger would be changed To pity for her. HER. That were strange indeed: 1041 Why dost thou think so? HYL. She did mean thee well.

But err'd unknowing

HER. Meant she well to slay Thy father? HyL. Thy new marriage was the cause: She had prepared a filter for thy love, 1045 And knew not 'twas a poison. HER. But say, who So skill'd in magic arts at Trachis here Could give her this? HYL. Thy savage centaur Nessus. Who did persuade her 'twould restore thy love Given to another wife. Her. Undone Alcides! 1050 I die, my child! there is no life for me. Alas! I see it now; I see my woes: Hyllus, away; thy father is no more: Begone, and call thy brothers; call Alcmena. The wife, alas! in vain the wife of Jove: 1055 Go, bring them here, that with my latest breath I may declare my fate, long since foretold By oracles divine. Hyī., Alcmena 's gone To Tirynth; with her many of thy sons Remain: some dwell at Thebes; the rest are here, And wait with me to hear and to obey thee. HER. Then listen to me, for the time is come When thou must prove thyself indeed my son. Know, Jove, my heavenly sire, long since foretold I was not born to perish by the hand 1065 Of living man, but from some habitant Of Pluto's dark abode should meet my fate. The centaur Nessus (so was it fulfill'd), Though dead, destroyed me; but I'll tell thee more; New oracles confirm'd the old : for, know. 1070 When to the Selli's sacred grove I came (The wandering priests, who o'er the mountains

1059 Tirynth or Tirynthia was a city in the neighbourhood of Argos.

roam,

And rest their wearied limbs on the cold ground). An ancient oak prophetic did declare. 1075 That if I lived to this decisive hour. Here all my labours, all my toils should end. I thought it told me I should live in peace: Alas! it only meant that I must die: For death will put an end to every care. Since thus it is, my son, thou too must join 1080 To ease Alcides: let me not reproach thee: But yield thy willing aid, nor e'er forget The best of laws,—obedience to a father. Hyl. Thy words affright me, but declare thy purpose: Behold me ready to perform thy orders. 1085 Whate'er they be. HER. First give me then thy hand. Hyl. But why this pledge, and wherefore anxious Dost thou require it! HER. Wilt thou give it me, Or dost refuse? HYL. There, take it: I obev. HER. First swear then by the head of Jove, my Hyl. I will; but what? HER. Swear that thou wilt perform All I enjoin thee. Bear me witness, Jove! HYL. I swear. HER. And imprecate the wrath divine, If thou perform'st it not. HYL. I shall not fail; But, if I do, may vengeance swift o'ertake me! 1095 Her. Thou know'st the top of Œta's sacred hill? Hyl. I know it well, and many a sacrifice Have offer'd there. HER. That is the destin'd place. Where thou, assisted by thy chosen friends,

My son! must bear the body of Alcides;

1100

There shalt thou cut thee many a leafy branch From the wild olive and deep-rooted oak: Then cast me on it, take thy torch, and light My funeral pile. Without one tear or groan Unmanly do it, if thou art my son: 1105 For if thou fail'st, remember, after death, A father's curses will sit heavy on thee. Hyl. Alas, my father! what hast thou commanded! What hast thou bade me do! What must be done. Or thou art not the son of Hercules. Hyl. A dreadful deed! And must I then become A parricide, and murder thee ! Her. O, no ! My kind physician, balm of all my woes. Hyl. Myself to cast thee in the flames? Is that An office fit for me ? If that alone 1115 Seem dreadful to thee, yet perform the rest. Hyl. I'll bear thee thither. Wilt thou raise the pile? Hyl. I will do any thing but be myself The executioner. 'Tis well, my son! But one thing more, and I am satisfied; 1120 Tis but a little. HYL. Be it e'er so great, I shall obey. Thou know'st the virgin daughter HER. Of Eurytus? HYL. .Iole ? HER. Her. my son. Remember, 'tis a father's last command, 1195 And thou hast sworn obedience; that Iole I do bequeath thee: take her to thy arms. When I am dead, and let her be thy wife: It is not fitting she, who lay by the side

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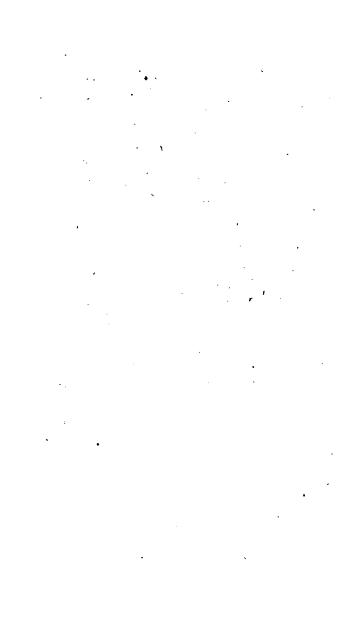
Of Hercules, to any but the son

Of Hercules should e'er descend: to thee · 1130
Alone I yield her. Speak not, but obey me:
After thy kind compliance, to refuse
So slight a favour were to cancel all.
HyL. Alas! distempered as he is, to chide him [aside.
Were most unkind; and yet, what madness this! 1135
HER. Thou wilt not do it, then?
HyL. What! marry her
Who slew my mother? Her, who hath brought
thee
To this sad state? It were an act of phrensy:
Death be my portion rather than to live
With those I hate.
HER. [turning to the Chorus.] He will not pay me
then 1140
The duty which he owes a dying father:
But, if thou dost not, curses from the gods
Await thee.
Hyl. O, thou ravest: it is the rage
Of thy distemper makes thee talk so wildly.
Her. Thou hast awaken'd all my woes; again
They torture now.
Hyl. Alas, what doubts arise, 1146
What fears perplex me!
Her. Mean'st thou to dispute
A father's will!
Hyl. Must I then learn of thee
To do a wicked deed?
Her. It is not wicked
If I request it of thee. Hyl. Is it just? 1150
Hyl. Is it just? 1150 Her. It is: the gods are witnesses 'tis just.
Hyr. Then by those gods I swear I will per-
form
What thou command'st: I never can be deem'd
Or base or impious for obeying thee.
Her. 'Tis well, my son! one added kindness
more, 1155
And I am satisfied: before the racks

Of dire convulsion and the pangs of madness Again attack me, throw me on the pile. Haste then, and bear me to it; there at last I shall have peace, and rest from all my sorrows. Hyl. Since 'tis thy will, my father, we submit. HER. Now, ere the dreadful malady return, Be firm, my soul! ev'n as the harden'd steel: Suspend thy cries, and meet the fatal blow With joy and pleasure. Bear me hence, my friends, For you have shown yourselves my friends indeed. And proved the base ingratitude of those From whom I sprang, the cruel gods, who saw Unmoved the woes of their unhappy son. Tis not in mortal to foresee his fate: 1170 Mine is to them disgraceful, and to me Most terrible; to me, of all mankind The most distress'd, the poor, the lost Alcides. CHO. Iole, come not forth, unhappy virgin! Already hast thou seen enough of wo. 1175

Already hast thou seen enough of wo, 1175
And yet fresh sorrows wait thee; but remember,
All is decreed, and all the work of Jove.

1174 Iole, we may suppose, is coming on the stage, anxious to know the fate of Hercules; but is stopped by the Chorus, and prevented from being a witness of the melancholy scene. Hercules is led out by Hyllus, who had promised to accompany him to Mount Œta, where he expired.





DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CEDIFUS, king of Thebes.
JOGASTA, wife of CEdipus.
CERON, brother to Jocasta.
TIRESIAS, a blind prophet of Thebes.
A SHEPHERD from Corinth.
A MESSENGER.
AN OLD SHEPHERD, formerly belonging to Laius.
HIGH PRISST of Jupiter.
CHORUS, composed of the priests and ancient men of
Thebes, Theban youths, children of CEdipus, attendants, &c.

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CEDIPUS TYRANNUS.

ARGUMENT.

LAIUS, king of Thebes, having learned from the oracle of Apollo that he was destined to perish by the hand of his son, commanded his wife Jocasta to destroy her infant as soon as it came into the world. The mother accordingly gave the child to a domestic, with orders to expose him on Mount Citheron, where he was found by one of the shepherds of Polybus, king of Corinth; who, having no children, determined, by the advice of his queen, to keep the boy in ignorance of the circumstances of his birth, and educate him as his own son. When Œdipus had arrived at years of maturity, he went to consult the oracle, which terrified him with the intelligence that he would commit parricide and incest. He now therefore resolved to return to Corinth no more; and travelling towards Phocis, met Laius, and, in a dispute which ensued, slew him. As Œdipus was ignorant of the rank and quality of the man whom he had killed, he was attracted to Thebes by the report of the sphinz; the overthrow of which monster raised him to the throne, while the prophecy was completed by his nuptials with the widow of Laius, by whom he had four children. The Theban territories were at length desolated by a plague, which the oracle declared should cease when the murderer of Laius was banished from Bœotia. After a minute investigation, the dreadful secret was at length divulged; and Jocasta put a period to her existence, while Œdipus deprived himself of sight, and was, at his own request, banished from Thebes my the order of Creon, the brother of Jecuste, who then assumed the reins of government.

ACT I.

Scene, Thebes before the palace of Œdipus.

CEDIPUS, HIGH-PRIEST OF JUPITER.

ŒDI. O MY loved sons! the youthful progeny Of ancient Cadmus! wherefore sit you here, And suppliant thus, with sacred boughs adorn'd, Crowd to our altars? Frequent sacrifice. And prayers, and sighs, and sorrows fill the land. 5 I could have sent to learn the fatal cause: But see, your anxious sovereign comes himself To know it all from you: behold your king, Renowned Œdipus. Do thou, old man (For best that office suits thy years), inform me 10 Why you are come. Is it the present ill That calls you here, or dread of future wo? Hard were indeed the heart that did not feel For grief like yours, and pity such distress. If there be aught that Œdipus can do 15 To serve his people, know me for your friend.

Priest. O king! thou seest what numbers throng

thy altars.

Here, bending sad beneath the weight of years,
The hoary priests, here crowd the chosen youth
Of Thebes, with these a weak and suppliant train 30
Of helpless infants: last, in me behold
The minister of Jove: far off thou seest
Assembled multitudes, with laurel crown'd,
To where Minerva's hallow'd temples rise
Frequent repair, or where Ismenus laves
Apollo's gacred shrine. Too well thou know'st.

¹ Œdipus, alarmed at the groans and lamentations of his people thronging to the altar, comes out of his palace to inquire into the cause of their distress. He calls his subjects the property of Cadmus, who was the founder of Thebes, about two had held years before his time.

Thy wretched Thebes, with dreadful storms oppress'd, Scarce lifts her head above the whelming flood: The teeming earth her blasted harvest mourns, And on the barren plain the flocks and herds 30 Unnumber'd perish; dire abortion thwarts The mother's hopes, and painful she brings forth The half-formed infant; baleful pestilence Hath laid our city waste; the fiery god Stalks o'er deserted Thebes; while, with our groans Enrich'd, the gloomy god of Erebus Triumphant smiles. O Œdipus! to thee We bend: behold these youths; with me they kneel, And suppliant at thy alters sue for aid, To thee, the first of men, and only less 40 Than they, whose favour thou alone canst gain, The gods above: thy wisdom yet may heal The deep-felt wounds, and make the powers divine Propitious to us. Thebes long since to thee Her safety owed, when, from the sphinx deliver'd, Thy grateful people saw thee, not by man But by the gods instructed, save the land. Now, then, thou best of kings! assist us now: O! by some mortal or immortal aid 50 Now succour the distress'd! On wisdom oft And prudent counsels, in the hour of ill, Success awaits. O dearest prince! support. Relieve thy Thebes; on thee, its saviour once, Again it calls: now, if thou wouldst not see The memory perish of thy former deeds, 55 Let it not call in vain: but rise, and save.

Sorm.—X

⁴⁵ The sphinx, according to poetical history, was a monster with the face of a woman, wings of a bird, body of a dog, and claws like a lion: she dwelt near Thebes, and every day destroyed many people. The oracle declared that she could never be conquered till some one was found that could expound a certain middle which she proposed. After many unsuccessful attempts, (Edipus came, and explained it; she sphinx was destroyed, the nation delivered, and Œdipus rewarded for it with the kind denoted the could be a supported by the sphink was destroyed, the nation delivered, and Œdipus rewarded for it with the kind denoted by the sphink was destroyed, the nation delivered, and Œdipus rewarded for it with

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With happiest omens once, and fair success, We saw thee crown'd: O! be thyself again, And may thy will and fortune be the same! If thou art yet to reign, O king! remember, Asovereign's riches is a peopled realm; For what will ships or lofty towers avail, Unarm'd with men to guard and to defend them! Œd. O my unhappy sons! too well I know Your sad estate; I know the woes of Thebes: And yet among you lives not such a wretch As Œdipus; for O! on me, my children! Your sorrows press. Alas! I feel for you, My people, for myself, for Thebes, for all.

O no; with many a tear I wept your fate,
And oft in meditation deep revolved
How best your peace and safety to restore.
The only medicine that my thoughts could find

Think not I slept regardless of your ills:

I have administered: Menœceus' son,
The noble Creon, went by my command
To Delphi, from Apollo's shrine to know
What must be done to save this wretched land.
'Tis time he were returned; I wonder much

At his delay: if, when he comes, your king Perform not all the god enjoins, then say He is the worst of men.

PRIEST. O king! thy words

Are gracious; and, if right these youths inform me,

Creon is here.

(Ed.) O Phæbus! grant he come
With tidings cheerful as the smile he wears! 85
PRIEST. He is the messenger of good; for see,
His brows are crown'd with laurel.

ŒDI. We shall soon

Be satisfied: he comes.

Enter CREON, CHORUS.

My dearest Creon!

O! say, what answer bear'st thou from the god!

Or good or ill!

95

CRE. Good, very good; for know, 90
The worst of ills, if rightly used, may prove
The means of happiness.

CEDI. What says my friend? This answer gives me naught to hope or fear.

CRE. Shall we retire, or would you that I speak.

In public here!

ŒDI. Before them all declare it:

Their woes sit heavier on me than my own.

CRE. Then mark what I have heard: the god commands

That instant we drive forth the fatal cause Of this dire pestilence, nor nourish here The accursed monster.

ŒDI. Who! what monster! how 100

Remove it!

CRE. Or by banishment, or death: Life must be given for life; for yet his blood Rests on the city.

CDI. Whose ! what means the god ! CRE. O king! before thee Laius ruled o'er Thebes. CDI. I know he did, though I did ne'er behold him.

Car. Laius was slain, and on his murderers (So Phœbus says) we must have vengeance.

CEDI.
Where,

Where are the murderers! who shall trace the guilt Buried so long in silence!

CRE. Here, he said,

Ev'n in this land: what's sought for may be found; But truth, unsearch'd for, seldom comes to light. 111 ŒDI. How did he fall, and where! at home, abroad!

Died he at Thebes, or in a foreign land?

CRE. He left his palace, fame reports, to seek Some oracle: since that we ne'er beheld him. 115

CEDI. But did no messenger return? Not one Of all his train, of whom we might inquire Touching this murder?

Cag. One, and one alone, Came back, who, flying, 'scaped the general slaugh ter:
But nothing, save one little circumstance, 126
Or knew, or e'er related.
ŒDI. What was that?
Much may be learn'd from that; a little dawn;
Of light appearing, may discover all.
CRE. Laius, attack'd by robbers, and oppress'd By number, fell; such is his tale.
CEDL Would they,— 18
Would robbers do so desperate a deed,
Unbribed and unassisted?
Cre. So indeed
Suspicion whisper'd then; but, Laius dead,
No friend was found to vindicate the wrong.
ŒDI. But what strange cause could stop inquiry
thus 130
Into the murder of a king?
Crr. The sphinx:
Her dire enigma kept our thought intent
On present ills, nor gave us time to search
The past mysterious deed.
ŒDI. Myself will try
Soon to unveil it: thou, Apollo! well,
And well hast thou, my Creon! lent thy aid;
Your Œdipus shall now perform his part:
Yes, I will fight for Phœbus and my country, And so I ought; for not to friends alone
Or kindred owe I this, but to myself.
Who murder'd him perchance would murder me;
His cause is mine; wherefore, my children! rise,
Take hence your suppliant boughs, and summor
here
The race of Cadmus, my assembled people.
Naught shall be left untried: Apollo leads, 140
And we will rise to joy, or sink for ever.
PRIEST. Haste then, my sons! for this we hither
came;

About it quick; and may the god, who sent This oracle, protect, defend, and save us! [Exemt.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I. O, thou great oracle divine! 150 Who didst to happy Thebes remove. From Delphi's golden shrine. And in sweet sounds declare the will of Jove: Daughter of hope! O! sooth my soul to rest. And calm the rising tumult in my breast. Look down, O Phœbus! on thy loved abode; Speak, for thou know'st the dark decrees of fate, Our present and our future state. O Delian! be thou still our healing god!

ANTISTROPHE I. Minerva! first on thee I call, 160 Daughter of Jove, immortal maid; Low beneath thy feet we fall: O! bring thy sister Dian to our aid. Goddess of Thebes! from thy imperial throne Look with an eye of gentle pity down; And thou, far-shooting Phœbus! once the friend Of this unhappy, this devoted land; O! now, if ever, let thy hand Once more be stretched to save and to defend. STROPHE II.

Great Thebes, my sons! is now no more: 170 She falls, and ne'er again shall rise; Naught can her health or strength restore; The mighty nation sinks, she droops, she dies. Stripp'd of her fruits behold the barren earth: 17 : The half-form'd infant struggles for a birth; The mother sinks, unequal to her pain: While, quick as birds in airy circles fly. Or lightnings from an angry sky, Crowds press on crowds to Pluto's dark domain.

X 2

k

ANTISTROPHE II. Behold, what heaps of wretches slain, Unburied, unlamented lie; Nor parents now nor friends remain	190
To grace their deaths with pious obsequy; The aged matron and the blooming wife, Clung to the altars, sue for added life. With sighs and groans united, Pæans rise; Re-echoed still doth great Apollo's name Their sorrows and their wants proclaim Frequent to him ascends the sacrifice. STROPHE III.	185
Haste, then, Minerva! beauteous maid! Descend in this afflictive hour;	190
Haste to thy dying people's aid; Drive hence this baneful, this destructive pow Who comes not arm'd with hostile sword or shi Yet strews with many a corse the ensanguined fi To Amphitrite's wide-extending bed, O! drive me, goddess, from thy favourite la Or let him, by thy dread command, Bury in Thracian waves his ignominious head	eld, eld. 196
O! now thy fiery terrors send; From thy dreadful stores above Let lightnings blast him, and let thunders rene	900 1.
And thou, O Lydian king! thy aid impart; Send from thy golden bow the unerring dart; Smile, chaste Diana! on this loved abode, While Theban Bacchus joins the maddening thre O god of wine, and mirth, and song! Now with thy torch destroy the base, ingloring god. [Executive Send of Send	ious

209 Bacchus is always described with torches: probably in remembrance of his birth, as being born in flames, when his mother Semele was consumed by Jove's lightning.

ACT II.

CEDIPUS, CHORUS, the People assembled. **CEDI.** Your prayers are heard; and, if you will 210 obev Your king, and hearken to his words, you soon Shall find relief: myself will heal your woes. I was a stranger to the dreadful deed, A stranger ev'n to the report till now: And vet, without some traces of the crime. I should not urge this matter: therefore hear me. I speak to all the citizens of Thebes, Myself a citizen; observe me well: If any know the murderer of Laius. Let him reveal it: I command you all: 220 But if, restrain'd by dread punishment, He hide the secret, let him fear no more; For naught but exile shall attend the crime, Whene'er confess'd: if by a foreign hand The horrid deed was done, who points him out 225 Commands our thanks, and meets a sure reward: But if there be who knows the murderer. And vet conceals him from us, mark his fate. Which here I do pronounce; let none receive, Throughout my kingdom, none hold converse with 230 him. Nor offer prayer, nor sprinkle o'er his head The sacred cup: let him be driven from all. By all abandon'd, and by all accursed; For so the Delphic oracle declared: And therefore to the gods I pay this duty, 235 And to the dead. O! may the guilty wretch, Whether alone, or by his impious friends

231 Before the sacrifice, it was customary for those who partook of it to wash their hands together in the lustral water, with which they were afterward sprinkled by the priests, by way of purification; to be denied this, was always considered as a mark of smilt and infamy.

Assisted, he perform'd the horrid deed,	
Denied the common benefits of nature,	
Wear out a painful life! and, O! if here,	240
Within my palace I conceal the traitor,	
On me and mine alight the vengeful curse!	
To you, my people! I commit the care	
Of this important business; 'tis my cause,	
The cause of Heaven, and your expiring county	rv.
Ev'n if the god had naught declared, to leave	246
This crime unexpiated were most ungrateful:	~
He was the best of kings, the best of men;	
That sceptre now is mine which Laius bore:	
His wife is mine; so would his children be,	250
Did any live; and therefore am I bound,	200
Ev'n as he were my father, to revenge him.	
Yes, I will try to find this murderer;	
I owe it to the son of Labdacus,	
To Polydorus, Cadmus, and the race	255
Of great Agenor. O! if yet there are	200
Who will not join me in the pious deed;	
From such may Earth withhold her annual store	
And barren be their bed, their life most wretche	
And their death cruel as the pestilence	260
That wastes our city; but on you, my Thebans!	
Who wish us fair success, may Justice smile	
Propitious, and the gods for ever bless!	
Cно. O king! thy imprecation unappall'd	
I hear, and join thee, guiltless of the crime,	965
Nor knowing who committed it. The god	
Alone, who gave the oracle, must clear	
Its doubtful sense, and point out the offender.	
Œn. 'Tis true; but who shall force the pov	/ers
dívine	
To speak their hidden purpose?	
Cно. One thing more,	270
If I might speak.	
ŒDI. Say on, whate'er thy mind	
Shall dictate to thee.	
Caro As among the gods	

All-knowing Phœbus, so to mortal men

Doth sage Tiresias in foreknowledge sure
Shine forth pre-eminent: perchance his aid
Might much avail us.

275

CEDI. Creon did suggest
The same expedient, and by his advice
Twice have I sent for this Tiresias; much
I wonder that he comes not.

CHo. Tis most fitting

We do consult him; for the idle tales 280
Which rumour spreads are not to be regarded.

Kpt. What are those tales! for naught should

we despise.

Сно. 'Tis said, some travellers did attack the king.

Œы. It is: but still no proof appears. Сно.

And yet, 285

If it be so, thy dreadful execration Will force the guilty to confess.

ŒDI. O no!

Who fears not to commit the crime will ne'er Be frighted at the curse that follows it.

Cno. Behold, he comes, who will discover all!
The holy prophet, see! They lead him hither: 990
He knows the truth, and will reveal it to us.

Enter TIRESIAS.

ŒDI. O sage Tiresias! thou, who knowest all
That can be known, the things of heaven above
And earth below; whose mental eye beholds,
Blind as thou art, the state of dying Thebes,
And weeps her fate; to thee we look for aid;
On thee alone for safety we depend.
This answer, which perchance thou hast not heard,
Apollo gave: The plague, he said, should cease,
When those who murder'd Laius were discover'd,
And paid the forfeit of their crime by death
Or banishment. O! do not then conceal
Aught that thy art prophetic, from the flight

Of birds or other omens, may disclose.	
O! save thyself, save this afflicted city.	305
Save (Edinus, avenge the guiltless dead	-
From this pollution! Thou art all our hope;	
Remember, 'tis the privilege of man,	
His noblest function, to assist the wretched.	
Tir. Alas! what misery it is to know,	310
When knowledge is thus fatal! O Tiresias!	010
Thou art undone. Would I had never come!	
ŒDI. What sayest thou! Whence this str	met '
dejection! Speak.	
Tim. Let me be gone; 'twere better for us bo	th
That I retire in silence: be advised.	315
ŒDI. It is ingratitude to Thebes, who bore	
And cherish'd thee; it is unjust to all,	
To hide the will of Heaven.	
Time. Tie rash in thee	ı
To ask, and rash I fear will prove my answer.	
Cно. O! do not, by the gods, conceal it from	us:
Suppliant we all request, we all conjure thee.	321
Tir. You know not what you ask: I'll not us	nveil
Your miseries to you.	
ŒDI. Know'st thou then our	fate,
And will not tell it? Mean'st thou to betray	
Thy country and thy king?	
Tir. I would not make	325
Myself and thee unhappy: why thus blame	
My tender care, nor listen to my caution?	
ŒDI. Wretch as thou art, thou wouldst prove	oke 8
stone,	
Inflexible and cruel, still implored,	
And still refusing.	000
Tir. Thou condemn'st my warmth,	330
Forgetful of thy own. ©EDI. Who would not rage.	
To see an injured people treated thus With vile contempt?	
Tir. What is decreed by Heav	
Must come to page though I reveal it not.	-

Epr. Still 'tis thy duty to inform us of it. Tir. I'll speak no more, not though thine anger swell Ev'n to its utmost. Nor will I be silent. ŒDI. I tell thee, once for all, thou wert thyself Accomplice in this deed; nay more, I think, But for thy blindness, wouldst with thine own hand Have done it too. Tue. Tis well: now hear Tiresias: The sentence, which thou didst thyself proclaim. Falls on thyself: henceforth shall never man Hold converse with thee, for thou art accursed; The guilty cause of this our city's woes. **Epr.** Audacious traitor! think'st thou to escape The hand of vengeance? Yes, I fear thee not; Tir. For truth is stronger than a tyrant's arm. CEDI. Whence didst thou learn this? Was it from thy art? Tre. I learn'd it from thyself: thou didst compel To speak, unwilling as I was. Œdi. Once more Repeat it then, that I may know my fate More plainly still. Is it not plain already. Tir. Or mean'st thou but to tempt me? No: but say. Œd. Speak it again. Again then I declare Tis. Thou art thyself the murderer whom thou seek'st. CEDL. A second time thou shalt not pass unpunish'd. Tm. What wouldst thou say, if I should tell thee all ? CEDI. Say what thou wilt; for all is false. Know then.

That Œdipus, in shameful bonds united

With those he loves, unconscious of his guilt, is yet most guilty.

ŒDI. Darest thou utter more,

And hope for pardon!

Tir. Yes, if there be strength

In sacred truth.

ŒDI. But truth dwells not in thee:
Thy body and thy mind are dark alike,
For both are blind; thy every sense is lost.

Tir. Thou dost upbraid me with the loss of that For which thyself ere long shall meet reproach

From every tongue.

CEDI. Thou blind and impious traitor!
Thy darkness is thy safeguard, or this hour 379
Had been thy last.

Tir. It is not in my fate. To fall by thee; Apollo guards his priest.

ŒDI. Was this the tale of Creon, or thy own? Tir. Creon is guiltless, and the crime is thine.

Edi. O riches, power, dominion, and thou far 375
Above them all, the best of human blessings,
Excelling wisdom, how doth envy love
To follow and oppress you! This fair kingdom,
Which, by the nation's choice and not my own,
I here possess, Creon, my faithful friend
(For such I thought him once), would now wrest
from me,

And hath suborn'd this vile impostor here,
This wand'ring hypocrite, of sharpest sight
When interest prompts, but ignorant and blind
When fools consult him. Tell me, prophet! where
Was all thy art, when the abhorred sphinx
Alarm'd our city? Wherefore did not then
Thy wisdom save us? Then the man divine
Was wanting; but thy birds refused their omens;
Thy god was silent: then came Œdipus,
This poor, unlearned, uninstructed sage,
Who not from birds uncertain omens drew,
But by his own sagacious mind explored

The Miden mystery; and now thou comest
To cast me from the throne my wisdom gain'd, 395
And share with Creon my divided empire.
But you should both lament your ill-got power,
You and your bold compeer; for thee, this moment,
But that I bear respect unto thy age,
I'd make thee rue thy execrable purpose.

400

Cno. You both are angry, therefore both to blame:

Much rather should you join, with friendly zeal

And mutual ardour, to explore the will

Of all-deciding Heaven.

TIR. What though thou rulest O'er Thebes despotic, we are equal here: 405 I am Apollo's subject, and not thine; Nor want I Creon to protect me. No; I tell thee, king! this blind Tiresias tells thee, Seeing thou seest not, know'st not where thou art, What, or with whom. Canst thou inform me who Thy parents are, and what thy horrid crimes 'Gainst thy own race, the living and the dead ! A father's and a mother's curse attend thee. Soon shall their furies drive thee from the land, And leave thee dark like me: what mountain then. Or conscious shore, shall not return the groans Of Œdipus, and echo to his woes? When thou shalt look on the detested bed, And in that haven where thou hopest to rest, Shalt meet with storm and tempest; then what ills Shall fall on thee and thine! Now vent thy rage On old Tiresias and the guiltless Creon: We shall be soon avenged, for ne'er did Heaven Cut off a wretch so base, so vile as thou art.

ŒDI. Must I bear this from thee? Away, begone! Home, villain, home!

Tir. I did not come to thee

Unsent for.

ŒDI. Had I thought thou wouldst have thus
Insulted me, I had not call'd thee hither.

HOPH.-V

Tir. Perhaps thou hold'st Tiresias as a fool And madman; but thy parents thought me wise.
ŒDI. My parents, saidst thou! Speak! who were
my parents? 431
Tim. This day, that gives thee life, shall give thee death.
ŒDI. Still dark, and still perplexing are the words Thou utter'st.
Tir. 'Tis thy business to unriddle.
And therefore thou canst best interpret them. 435
ŒDI. Thou dost reproach me for my virtues.
Tir. They,
And thy good fortune, have undone thee.
ŒDI. Since
I sav'd the city, I'm content.
Tir. Farewell.
Boy, lead me hence.
ŒDI. Away with him, for here
His presence but disturbs us; being gone, 440
We shall be happier.
Tir. Œdipus! I go;
But first inform thee (for I fear thee not)
Wherefore I came: know, then, I came to tell thee,
The man thou seek'st, the man on whom thou
pour'dst
Thy execrations, ev'n the murderer 445
Of Laius, now is here; a seeming stranger,
And yet a Theban. He shall suffer soon
For all his crimes: from light and affluence driven
To penury and darkness, poor and blind,
Propp'd on his staff, and from his native land 450
Expell'd, I see him in a foreign clime
A helpless wanderer; to his sons at once
A father and a brother; child and husband
Of her from whom he sprang. Adulterous,
Incestuous parricide! now fare thee well; 455
•
432 That is, "This day, which shall discover who thy parents are that gave thee life, shall also, by that discovery, cause thy death, when thou shalt be found the murderer of thy father."

Go, learn the truth; and, if it be not so, Say I have ne'er deserved the name of prophet.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

When will the guilty wretch appear,
Whom Delphi's sacred oracle demands;
Author of crimes too black for mortal ear,
Dipping in royal blood his sacrilegious hands?
Swift as the storm by rapid whirlwinds driven,
Quick let him fly the inpending wrath of Heaven;
For lo, the angry son of Jove,

Arm'd with red lightnings from above, 465

Pursues the murderer with immortal hate,

And round him spreads the snares of unrelenting
fate.

ANTISTROPHE I.

From steep Parnassus' rocky cave,
Cover'd with snow, came forth the dread command;
Apollo thence his sacred mandate gave,
To search the man of blood through every land.
Silent and sad the weary wanderer roves
O'er pathless rocks and solitary groves,
Hoping to 'scape the wrath divine

Denounced from great Apollo's shrine: 475
Vain hopes to 'scape the fate by Heaven decreed
For vengeance hovers still o'er his devoted head.

STROPHE II.

Tiresias, famed for wisdom's lore, Hath dreadful ills to Œdipus divined;

And as his words mysterious I explore, 480 Unnumber'd doubts perplex my anxious mind: Now raised by hope, and now with fears oppress'd, Sorrow and joy alternate fill my breast.

How should these hapless kings be foes,
When never strife between them rose?

485
Or why should Laius, slain by hands unknown,
Bring foul disgrace on Polybus' unhappy son?

ANTISTROPHE II.

· 490

495

From Phebus and all-seeing Jove Naught can be hid of actions here below;

But earthly prophets may deceitful prove, And little more than other mortals know. Though much in wisdom man doth man excel,

In all that's human error still must dwell.

Could he commit the bloody deed,

Who from the sphinx our city freed?
O no! he never shed the guiltless blood;
The sphinx declares him wise, and innoces

The sphinx declares him wise, and innocent, and good. [Exeunt.

ACT III.

CREON, CHORUS.

CRE. O citizens! with grief I hear your king
Hath blasted the fair fame of guiltless Creon,
And most unjustly brands me with a crime
My soul abhors. While desolation spreads
On every side, and universal ruin
Hangs o'er the land, if I in word or deed
Could join to swell the woes of hapless Thebes,
I were unworthy, nay, I would not wish
To live another day. Alas, my friends!
Thus to be deem'd a traitor to my country,
To you, my fellow-citizens, to all
That hear me; O, 'tis infamy and shame!
I cannot, will not bear it.

Сно. "Twas the effect 510 Of sudden anger only; what he said, But could not think.

CRE. Who told him I suborn'd The prophet to speak falsely? What could raise This vile suspicion?

Cно. Such he had, but whence I know not.

CRE. Talk'd he thus with firm composure 515

And confidence of mind?

Cmo. I cannot say:

Tis not for me to know the thoughts of kings,
Or judge their actions: but, behold, he comes.

Enter CEDIPUS.

CEDI. Ha! Creon here? And darest thou thus approach 519

My palace? thou, who wouldst have murder'd me,
And taken my kingdom? By the gods, I ask thee
(Answer me! traitor), didst thou think me fool
Or coward, that I could not see thy arts,
Or had not strength to vanquish them? What madness.

What strange infatuation, led thee on,
Without or force or friends, to grasp at empire,
Which only their united force can give ?
What wert thou doing ?

vnat wert thou doing : Cre.

Hear what I shall answer,

Then judge impartial.

Thou canst talk it well,

But I shall ne'er attend to thee; thy guilt 530 Is plain; thou art my deadliest foe.

Crr. But hear

What I shall urge.

Œdi.

CEDI. Say not thou art innocent.

Car. If self-opinion, void of reason, seem Conviction to thee, know, thou err'st most grossly.

Œpr. And thou more grossly, if thou think'st to pass 535

Unpunish'd for this injury to thy friend.

CRE. I should not, were I guilty; but what crime Have I committed? Tell me.

ŒDI. Wert not thou The man who urged me to require the aid

Of your all-knowing prophet?

Cag. True, I was; 540
I did persuade you: so I would again.

Œdi. How long is it since Laius— Cas. Laius? what?

Œdi. Since Laius fell by hands unknown! CRE. A long. Long tract of years. Was this Tiresias then Œn: A prophet! CRE. Ay, in wisdom and in fame, 545 As now, excelling. Did he then say aught Œdi. Concerning me ! I never heard he did. ŒDI. Touching this murder, did you ne'er inquire Who were the authors? Doubtless; but in vain. Œpi. Why did not the same prophet then inform CRE. I know not that, and when I'm ignorant I'm always silent. What concerns thyself At least thou know'st, and therefore shouldst declare it. CRE. What is it! speak; and if 'tis in my power, I'll answer thee. ŒDI. Thou know'st, if this Tiresias 555 Had not combined with thee, he would not thus Accuse me as the murderer of Laius. Car. What he declares thou best canst tell; of What thou requirest, myself am yet to learn. ŒDI. Go, learn it, then; but ne'er shalt thou discover 560 That Œdipus is guilty. CRE. Art not thou My sister's husband? ŒDI. Granted. CRE. Join'd with her. Thou rulest o'er Thebes. 'Tis true, and all she asks Most freely do I give her. Is not Creon CRE. In honour next to you!

ŒDI. Thou art, and therefore 565 The more ungrateful. Hear what I shall plead. And thou wilt never think so: tell me, prince, Is there a man who would prefer a throne, With all its dangers, to an equal rank In peace and safety? I am not of those 570 Who choose the name of king before the power; Fools only make such wishes: I have all From thee, and fearless I enjoy it all. Had I the sceptre, often must I act Against my will. Know, then, I am not yet 575 So void of sense and reason as to quit A real 'vantage for a seeming good. Am I not happy? am I not revered, Embraced, and loved by all? To me they come Who want thy favour, and by me acquire it: What then should Creon wish for? Shall he leave All this for empire! Bad desires corrupt The fairest mind: I never entertain'd A thought so vile, nor would I lend my aid To forward such base purposes. But go 585 To Delphi; ask the sacred oracle If I have spoke the truth: if there you find That with the prophet I conspired, destroy The guilty Creon: not thy voice alone 590 Shall then condemn me, for myself will join In the just sentence; but accuse me not On weak suspicion's most uncertain test. Justice would never call the wicked good. Or brand fair virtue with the name of vice, 595 Unmerited: to cast away a friend Faithful and just, is to deprive ourselves Of life and being, which we hold most dear: But time, and time alone, revealeth all; That only shows the good man's excellence: 800 A day sufficeth to unmask the wicked. Cно. O king! his caution merits your regard; Who judge in haste do seldom judge aright.

CEDI. When they are quick who plot against my life. Tis fit I should be quick in my defence: If I am tame and silent, all they wish 605 Will soon be done, and Œdipus must fall. CRE. What wouldst thou have! my banishment! Œdi. Thy death. CRE. But first inform me wherefore I should die. ŒDI. Dost thou rebel then? Wilt thou not submit ! Orr. Not when I see thee thus deceived. 'Tis fit 610 I should defend my own. And so should I. ŒDI. Thou art a traitor. What, if I should prove CRE. I am not so? A king must be obey'd CRE. Not if his orders are unjust. Œni. O Thebes! O citizens! CRE. I too can call on Thebes: 615 She is my country. Сно. O! no more, my lords! For, see, Jocasta comes in happiest hour To end your contest. Enter JOCASTA.

Joc. Whence this sudden tumult?
O princes! is this well, at such a time
With idle broils to multiply the woes 620
Of wretched Thebes? Home, home, for shame;
nor thus
With private quarrel swell the public ruin.

CRE. Sister! thy husband hath most basely used me;

He threatens me with banishment or death.

ŒDI. I do confess it; for he did conspire,

With vile and wicked arts, against my life.

CRE. O! may I never prosper, but, accursed, Unpitied, perish if I ever did! Joc. Believe him, Œdipus! revere the gods Whom he contests, if thou dost love Jocasta: 630 Thy subjects beg it of thee. Hear, O king! Сво. Consider, we entreat thee. What wouldst have? Think you I'll e'er submit to him ! Revere His character, his oath, both pleading for him. CEDI. But know you what you ask? We do. Сно. ŒDI. What is it? 635 Cho. We ask thee to believe a guiltless friend, Nor cast him forth dishonour'd thus, on slight Suspicion's weak surmise. ŒDL. Requesting this, You do request my banishment or death. CHO. No, by you leader of the heavenly host, 640 The immortal sun, I had not such a thought: I only felt for Thebes' distressful state, And would not have it by domestic strife Imbitter'd thus. Why, let him then depart: If Œdipus must die, or leave his country 645 For shameful exile, be it so: I yield To thy request, not his; for hateful still Shall Creon ever be. CRE. Thy stubborn soul Bends with reluctance, and, when anger fires it, Is terrible; but natures form'd like thine Are their own punishment. Wilt thou not hence? Œni. Wilt not be gone? I go: thou know'st me not: But these will do me justice. [Exit Creon. Princess! now

Persuade him to retire.

Joc.	First let me know	
The cause of this d	issension.	
Сно.	From reports	655
	icions most injurious,	
The quarrel rose.		_
Joc.	Was the accusation mutual	Ţ
CHO. It was.	4.6.33 - 13.43 - 4	
	at follow'd then!	
Сно.	Ask me no m	ore ;
Enough's aiready ki	nown: we'll not repeat	
The woes of haples		
ŒDI.	You are all blind,	999
Insensible, unjust;		
Yet boast your piet		
Again I say, that no	I said before,	
	ld mark me for the worst	
	idst save expiring Thebes.	665
Of men; for more	protect, preserve thy countr	
Ica Oking Linfo	rm me, whence this strange	dia.
sension?	im me, whence this strange	. шэ-
	e, my Jocasta! (for thou kno	w ⁹ et
The love I hear the	e), what this wicked Creon	, M 136
Did artfully devise	against me	
Joc.	Speak it,	670
If he indeed be guilt		•
Œpi.	Creon savs	
That I did murder I		
Joc.	Spake he this	
As knowing it himse	elf, or from another !	
Œpr. He had sub	orn'd that evil-working price	st,
And sharpens every	tongue against his king.	675
Joc. Let not a fea	ar perplex thee, Œdipus!	
Mortals know nothi	ing of futurity,	
	c seers are all impostors;	
I'll prove it to thee.	Know, then, Laius once,	
Not from Apollo, by	ut his priests, received	680
An oracle, which a	aid it was decreed	
He should be slain	by his own son, the offsprin	$\sigma \mathbf{g}$
	•	

Of Laius and Jocasta; yet he fell By strangers, murder'd (for so fame reports) By robbers in the place where three ways meet. 685 A son was born; but ere three days had pass'd, The infant's feet were bored; a servant took, And left him on the pathless mountain's top, To perish there: thus Phæbus ne'er decreed That he should kill his father, or that Laius 690 (Which much he fear'd) should by his son be slain. Such is the truth of oracles: henceforth Regard them not. What Heaven would have us know It can with ease unfold, and will reveal it. ŒDI. What thou hast said, Jocasta! much disturbs me: 695 I tremble at it. Joc. Wherefore shouldst thou fear! ŒDI. Methought I heard thee say, Laius was slain Where three ways meet. Joc. Twas so reported then, And is so still. Œnt. Where happened the misfortune? Joc. In Phocis, where the roads unite that lead To Delphi and to Daulia. 701 ŒDI. How long since? Joc. A little time ere you began to reign O'er Thebes, we heard it. Œnt. O almighty Jove! What wilt thou do with me? Joc. Why talk'st thou thus? ŒDI. Ask me no more; but tell me of this Laius. What was his age and stature? Joc. He was tall: 706 His hairs just turning to the silver hue; His form not much unlike thy own. 0 me! Œdi. Sure I have call'd down curses on myself. Unknowing.

Joc. Ha! what say'st thou, Œdipus! 7	10
I tremble while I look on thee.	
ŒDI. O! much	
I fear, the prophet saw too well: but say,	
One thing will make it clear.	
Joc. I dread to hear it;	
Yet speak, and I will tell thee.	
ŒDI. Went he forth	
,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,	115
In kingly pomp?	
Joc. They were but five in all,	
The herald with them; but one chariot there,	
Which carried Laius.	
ŒDI. O! 'tis but too plain.	
Who brought the news?	
Joc. A servant, who alone	
Escaped with life.	
ŒDI. That servant, is he here?	/20
Joc. O no: his master slain, when he return'd,	
And saw thee on the throne of Thebes, with pray	ver
Most earnest he besought me to dismiss him,	,
That he might leave this city, where he wish'd	
	725
And feed my flocks: I granted his request:	
For that and more his honest services	
Had merited.	`
ŒDI. I beg he may be sent for	
Immediately.	
Joc. He shall; but wherefore is it?	
ŒDI. I fear thou hast said too much, and the	ro_
	30
To see him.	JU
Joc. He shall come: but, O my lord!	
Am I not worthy to be told the cause	
Of this distress?	
Thou art my hope; to whom should I impart	124
My sorrows but to thee? Know then, Jocasta!	100
am the son of Polybus, who reigns	
t Corinth, and the Dorian Merope	

His queen: there long I held the foremost rank. Honour'd and happy, when a strange event (For strange it was, though little meriting 740 The deep concern I felt) alarm'd me much. A drunken reveller at a feast proclaim'd That I was only the supposed son Of Corinth's king. Scarce could I bear that day The vile reproach; the next, I sought my parents, And ask'd of them the truth; they too, enraged, 746 Resented much the base indignity. I liked their tender warmth, but still I felt A secret anguish; and, unknown to them, Sought out the Pythian oracle, in vain. 750 Touching my parents, nothing could I learn; But dreadful were the miseries it denounced Against me: 'twas my fate, Apollo said, To wed my mother, to produce a race Accursed and abhorr'd, and last to slay **7**55 My father who begat me :—sad decree! Lest I should e'er fulfil the dire prediction. Instant I fled from Corinth, by the stars Guiding my hapless journey, to the place Where thou report'st this wretched king was slain. But I will tell thee the whole truth: at length. 761 I came to where the three ways meet: when lo! A herald, with another man, like him Whom thou describest, and in a chariot, met me. Both strove with violence to drive me back. Enraged, I struck the charioteer, when straight, As I advanced, the old man saw, and twice Smote me on the head; but dearly soon repaid The insult on me: from his chariot roll'd. Prone on the earth, beneath my staff he fell. 770 And instantly expired; the attendant train All shared his fate. If this unhappy stranger And Laius be the same, lives there a wretch So cursed, so hateful to the gods as I am? Nor citizen nor alien must receive. Or converse or communion hold with me, Soph.—Z

But drive me forth with infamy and shame: The dreadful curse pronounced with my own lips Shall soon o'ertake me : I have stain'd the bed Of him whom I had murder'd; am I then 780 Aught but pollution? If I fly from hence, The bed of incest meets me, and I go To slay my father Polybus, the best, The tenderest parent; this must be the work Of some malignant power. Ye righteous gods! Let me not see that day, but rest in death, Rather than suffer such calamity. Cно. O king! we pity thy distress: but wait With patience his arrival, and despair not. 789 **CEDI.** That shepherd is my only hope: Jocasta! Would he were here! Joc. Suppose he were: what then! What wouldst thou do ? I'll tell thee; if he says The same as thou dost, I am safe, and guiltless. Joc. What said I then? Thou saidst, he did report Laius was slain by robbers: if 'tis true 795 He fell by numbers, I am innocent, For I was unattended; if but one Attack'd and slew him, doubtless I am he. Joc. Be satisfied, it must be as he first Reported it: he cannot change the tale. 800 Not I alone, but the whole city heard it: Or grant he should, the oracle was ne'er Fulfill'd; for Phæbus said, Jocasta's son Should slav his father: that could never be. For, O! Jocasta's son long since is dead. 805 He could not murder Laius; therefore, never Will 1 attend to prophecies again. ŒDI. Right, my Jocasta! but, I beg thee, send And fetch this shepherd; do not fail. Joc. I will. This moment; come, my lord! let us go in; I will do nothing but what pleases thee.

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GD.		٠,	,

CEDIPUS TYRANNUS .- ACT III.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.	
Grant me, henceforth, ye powers divine!	
In virtue's purest paths to tread;	
In every word, in every deed,	
May sanctity of manners ever shine;	815
Obedient to the laws of Jove,	
The laws descended from above;	
Which, not like those by feeble mortals given,	
Buried in dark oblivion lie,	
Or, worn by time, decay and die:	820
But bloom eternal like their native heaven!	
ANTISTROPHE I.	
Pride first gave birth to tyranny:	
That hateful vice, insulting Pride,	
When, every human power defied,	
She lifts to glory's height her votary;	825
Soon stumbling, from her tottering throne	والقران
She throws the wretched victim down.	
But may the god, indulgent, hear my prayer,	
That god whom humbly I adore	690
O! may he smile on Thebes once more, And take its wretched monarch to his care!	830
STROPHE II.	
Perish the impious and profane,	
Who, void of reverential fear,	
Nor justice nor the laws revere;	
Who leave their god for pleasure or for gain;	835
Who swell by fraud their ill-got store;	
Who rob the wretched and the poor.	
If vice, unpunish'd, virtue's meed obtain,	
Who shall refrain the impetuous soul,	
The rebel passions who control,	840
Or wherefore do I lead this choral train?	
ANTISTROPHE II.	
No more to Delphi's sacred shrine	
Need we with incense now repair;	
No more shall Phocis hear our prayer,	
Nor fair Olympia see her rites divine:	845

If oracles no longer prove
The power of Phœbus and of Jove.
Great lord of all! from thy eternal throne
Behold how impious men defame
Thy loved Apollo's honour'd name:

850
Q! guard his rights, and vindicate thy own. [Exeunt.

ACT IV.

JOCASTA, CHORUS.

Joc. Sages and rulers of the land! I come To seek the altars of the gods, and there With incense and oblations to appeare Offended Heaven. My Œdipus, alas! 855 No longer wise and prudent, as you all Remember once he was, with present things Compares the past, nor judges like himself: Unnumber'd cares perplex his anxious mind, And every tale awakes new terrors in him. 860 Vain is my counsel, for he hears me not. First then to thee, O Phæbus! (for thou still Art near to help the wretched), we appeal, And suppliant beg thee now to grant thy aid Propitious: deep is our distress; for, O! 865 We see our pilot sinking at the helm, And much already fear the vessel lost.

Enter SHEPHERD from Corinth.

Shep. Can you instruct me, strangers! which way lies

The palace of king Œdipus? himself

I would most gladly see. Can you inform me? 870

Cho. This is the palace; he is now within;

Thou seest his queen before thee.

Shep. Ever bless'd,

And happy with the happy mayst thou live!

Ioc. Stranger! the same good wish to thee, for well

Thy words deserve it: but say, wherefore comest thou, 875

And what's thy news !

SHEP. To thee, and to thy husband.

Pleasure and joy!

Joc. What pleasure! and whence art thou!
SHEP. From Corinth: to be brief, I bring thee
tidings

Of good and evil.

Joc. Ha! what mean thy words

Ambiguous?

SHEF. Know, then, if report say true, 880 The Isthmian people will choose Œdipus Their sovereign.

Joc. Is not Polybus their king ?

SHEP. No; Polybus is dead.

Joc. What say'st thou! dead!
Shep. If I speak falsely, may death seize on
me!

Joo. [to one of her Attendants.] Why fliest thou not to tell thy master? Hence! 885 What are you now, you oracles divine? Where is your truth? The fearful Œdipus From Corinth fled, lest he should slay the king. This Polybus, who perish'd, not by him, But by the hand of Heaven.

Enter EDIPUS.

ŒDI. My dear Jocasta! 890
Why hast thou call'd me hither?
Joc. Hear this man;
And when thou hear'st him, mark what faith is due
To your revered oracles.
ŒDI. What is he,
And what doth he report!

001 mm ' . . 1 . 601 t 11 31 . 1 32 . 6....

Joc. He comes from Cor And says, thy father, Polybus, is dead. Enr. What say'st thou, stranger? Speak to O! speak.	895
SHEP. If touching this thou first desirest answer,	my
Know, he is dead.	
ŒDI. How died he! say, by trea	son,
Or some disease ! SHEP. Alas! a little force	
SHEP. Alas! a little force Will lay to rest the weary limbs of age.	900
ŒDI. Distemper then did kill him?	300
Shep. That in	nort.
And part a length of years that wore him down	n.
ŒDI. Now, my Jocasta, who shall henced	forth
To prophecies, and seers, and clamorous birds	
With their vain omens? they who had decreed	905
That I should kill my father! He, thou seest,	
Beneath the earth lies buried, while I live	
In safety here, and guiltless of his blood:	
Unless, perhaps, sorrow for the loss of me	
Shorten'd his days, thus only could I kill	910
My father; but he's gone, and to the shades	
Hath carried with him those vain oracles	
Of fancied ill, no longer worth my care.	
Joc. Did I not say it would be thus!	
Œpi. Thou d	ilast;
But I was full of fears. Joc. Henceforth, no more	015
Indulge them.	915
Edi. But my mother's bed—that stir	11
Must be avoided: I must fly from that.	1.1
Joc. Why should man fear, whom chance	and
chance alone,	, anu
Doth ever rule! Foreknowledge all is vain,	
And can determine nothing: therefore best	920
It is to live as fancy leads, at large,	
Uncurb'd and only subject to our will.	
The man of the court of the cou	

Fear not thy mother's bed: of times in dreams Have men committed incest; but his life 925 Will ever be most happy who contemns Such idle phantoms. CEDI. Thou wert right, Jocasta! Did not my mother live; but as it is, Spite of thy words, I must be anxious still. Joc. Think on thy father's death; it is a light To guide thee here. Œdi. 930 It is so; yet I fear, While she survives him. Who is it you mean? What woman fear you? Merope, the wife Œdi. Of Polybus. SHEP. And wherefore fear you her ! **ŒDI.** Know, stranger, a most dreadful oracle Concerning her affrights me. May I know it, Or must it be reveal'd to none but thee ? Œpi. O. no. I'll tell thee: Phæbus hath declared That Œdipus should stain his mother's bed, And dip his hands in his own father's blood: Wherefore I fled from Corinth, and lived here, 940 In happiness indeed; but still thou know'st It is a blessing to behold our parents, And that I had not. Was it for this cause Thou wert an exile then? It was; I fear'd Œdi. 944 That I might one day prove my father's murderer. SHEP. What if I come, O king! to banish hence Thy terrors, and restore thy peace? ŒDI. O stranger! Couldst thou do this. I would reward thee nobly. SHEP. Know, then, for this I came; I came to

serve, And make thee happy.

Œdi.	But I will not go	950
Back to my parents.	Son, I see thou know	-1-44
SHEP. What thou art doing.		A St HOL
ŒDI.	Wherefore think'st	thou so !
	e then do thou instru	
SHEP. If thou did	lst fly from Corintl	ı for this
ŒDI. Apollo's dire	predictions still affrig pollution from thy p	
And that alone, I dre	ad.	
SHEP.	Thy fears are vai	n.
ŒDI. Not if they a		
SHEP.	Polyt)us
Was not akin to thee	What say'st thou?	Sneak .
Say, was not Polybus		opeak,
SHEP.	No:	960
No more than he is r		
ŒDI.	Why call me th	en
His son!	na since I asso thes	to him.
He did receive thee	ng since I gave thee	to mm:
Œpi.		leed!
And could he love an	other's child so well	ļ
	ildren ; that persuade	l him 965
To take and keep the		43
ŒDI.	Didst thou buy m	
Or am I thine, and m	in Cithæron's woody	: r vola
Œpi. What brough		vaio.
SHEP.	I came to feed	my flocks
On the green mounta	in's side.	•
ŒDL.	It seems thou v	wert 970
A wandering shepher		
SHEP. I saved thee from des	Thy deliverer,	
a marca viice from des	er actions	

273 ŒDI. How! what then Had happen'd to me? Thy own feet will best Inform thee of that circumstance. ŒDL Alas! Why call'st thou to remembrance a misfortune 975 Of so long date? 'Twas I who loosed the tendons SHEP. Of thy bored feet. It seems, in infancy, ŒDI. I suffer'd much then. To this incident SHEP. Thou owest thy name. My father or my mother. Œdi. Who did it? Know'st thou? He who gave thee to me Must tell thee that. Then from another's hand 981 Thou didst receive me? Ay, another shepherd. **Edi.** Who was he! Canst thou recollect! 'Twas one. At least so called, of Laius' family. ŒDI. Laius, who ruled at Thebes? The same: this man Was shepherd to King Laius. Lives he still? ŒDI. 986

And could I see him?

SHEP. [pointing to the Chorus.] Some of these, perhaps.

His countrymen, may give you information.

ŒDI. [to the Chorus.] O! speak, my friends! if any of you know

This shepherd; whether still he lives at Thebes, 990 Or in some neighbouring country; tell me quick, For it concerns us near.

979 Œdipus signifies, in the Greek, "swelled foot:" taking his name from the sore and swelling of his foot

Сно. It must be he Whom thou didst lately send for; but the queen Can best inform thee. ŒDI. Know'st thou, my Jocasta! Whether the man whom thou didst order hither, 995 And whom the shepherd speaks of, be the same? Joc. Whom meant he! for I know not. Œdipus! Think not so deeply of this thing. Good Heaven Forbid, Jocasta! I should now neglect To clear my birth, when thus the path is mark'd And open to me. 1001 Do not, by the gods Joc. I beg thee, do not, if thy life be dear, Make farther search, for I have felt enough Already from it. Rest thou satisfied: ŒDI. Were I descended from a race of slaves. 1005 'Twould not dishonour thee. Joc. Yet hear me : do not. Once more, I beg thee, do not search this matter. ŒDI. I will not be persuaded: I must search, And find it too. I know it best, and best Joc. Advise thee. ŒDI. That advice perplexes more. Joc. O! would to Heaven that thou mayst never know Or who or whence thou art! ŒDI. [to the Attendant.] Let some one fetch That shepherd quick, and leave this woman here To glory in her high descent. Joc. Alas! Unhappy Œdipus! that word alone 1015 I now can speak: remember, 'tis my last. Exit JOCASTA.

CHO. Why fled the queen in such disorder hence? Sorely distress'd she seemed, and much I fear Her silence bodes some sad event.

ŒDI. Whate'er May come of that, I am resolved to know 1020 The secret of my birth, how mean soever It chance to prove: perhaps her sex's pride May make her blush to find I was not born Of noble parents; but I call myself The son of Fortune, my indulgent mother, 1025 Whom I shall never be ashamed to own. The kindred months, that are, like me, her children: The years, that roll obedient to her will.— Have raised me from the lowest state to power And splendour; wherefore, being what I am, I need not fear the knowledge of my birth.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

If my prophetic soul doth well divine,
Ere on thy brow to-morrow's sun shall shine,
Cithæron! thou the mystery shalt unfold:
The doubtful Œdipus, no longer blind,
Shall soon his country and his father find,
And all the story of his birth be told:
Then shall we in grateful lays,
Celebrate our monarch's praise,
And in the sprightly dance our songs triumphant
raise.
1040

ANTISTROPHE.

What heavenly power gave birth to thee, O king?
From Pan, the god of mountains, didst thou spring,
With some fair daughter of Apollo join'd?
Art thou from him who o'er Cyllene reigns,
Swift Hermes, sporting in Arcadia's plains?
Some nymph of Helicon did Bacchus find;
Bacchus, who delights to rove
Through the forest, hill, and grove,
And art thou, prince, the offspring of their love?

Enter ŒDIPUS, SHEFFIERD from Corinth.

ŒDI. If I may judge of one whom yet I ne'er
Had converse with, you old man whom I see 1051

This way advancing, must be that same shepherd We lately sent for, by his age and mien, Ev'n as this stranger did describe him to us. My servants too are with him; but you best 1055 Can say, for you must know him well. Сно. Tis he.

My lord! the faithful shepherd of King Laius. ŒDI. [to the Shepherd from Corinth.] What say'st thou, stranger! is it he! It is.

SHEP.

Enter OLD SHEPHERD.

CEDI. Now answer me, old man! look this way; speak:

Didst thou belong to Laius?

O. SHEP. Sir. I did: 1060 No hireling slave, but in his palace bred,

I serv'd him long.

Œnt. What was the business there! O. Shep. For my life's better part I tended sheep.

ŒDI. And whither didst thou lead them?

O. SHEP. To Cithæron,

And to the neighbouring plains.

Œdi. Behold this man; 1065 [pointing to the Shepherd of Corinth

Dost thou remember to have seen him?

Whom? O. SHEP.

What hath he done?

Him who now stands before thee: Œdi. Call'st thou to mind or converse or connexion Between vou in times past?

O. SHEP. I cannot say

I recollect it now.

SHEP. I do not wonder 1070 He should forget me; but I will recall Some facts of ancient date: he must remember. When on Cithæron we together fed Our several flocks, in daily converse join'd. From spring to autumn, and when winter bleak 1076

Approach'd, retired: I to my little cot Convey'd my sheep, he to the palace led His fleecy care. Canst thou remember this! O. SHEP. I do, but that is long since. Shep. It is so; But say, good shepherd, canst thou call to mind 1080 An infant, whom thou didst deliver to me, Requesting me to breed him as my own? O. Sher. Ha! wherefore ask'st thou this? SHEP. [pointing to ŒDIPUS.] Behold him here. That very child. O. SHEP. O! say it not; away! Perdition on thee! Why reprove him thus? Œdi. 1085 Thou art thyself to blame, old man! O. SHEP. In what Am I to blame, my lord! Œm. Thou wilt not speak Touching this boy. Alas, poor man! he knows not O. SHEP. What he hath said. If not by softer means To be persuaded, force shall wring it from thee. 1090 O. SHEP. Treat not an old man harshly. ŒDI. [to the Attendants.] Bind his hands. O. SHEP. Wherefore, my lord? What wouldst thou have me do ? Œpr. That child he talks of, didst thou give it to O. SHEP. I did, and would to Heaven I then had died! ŒDI. Die soon thou shalt, unless thou tell'st it all. O. SHEP. Say, rather, if I do. This fellow means Œdi. To trifle with us, by his dull delay. O. SEEP. I do not; said I not, I gave the child? ŒDI. Whence came the boy? Was he thy own,

or who
Did give him to thee!

From another hand 1100 O. SHEP. I had received him. ŒDI. Say, what hand? from whom? Whence came he? O. SHEP. Do not, by the gods! I beg thee Do not inquire. Œdī. Force me to ask again, And thou shalt die. O. SHEP. In Laius' palace born. ŒDI. Son of a slave, or of the king! O. SHEP. Alas! 1105 Tis death for me to speak. And me to hear; Œdi. Yet sav it. O. Shep. He was call'd the son of Laius: But ask the queen, for she can best inform thee. ŒDI. Did she then give the child to thee! O. SHEP. She did. ŒDI. For what? To kill him. O. SHEP. Œdi. Kill her child! Inhuman 1110 And barbarous mother! O. SHEP. A dire oracle Affrighted and constrained her to it. Ha! Œdi. What oracle? O. SHEP. Which said, her son should slav His parents. Œdi. Wherefore gavest thou then the infant To this old shepherd? O. SHEP. Pity moved me to it: I hoped he would have soon convey'd his charge To some far distant country: he, alas! Preserved him but for misery and wo; For, O my lord! if thou indeed art he, Thou art of all mankind the most unhappy. ŒDI. O me! at length the mystery's unravell'd: "Tis plain; 'tis clear; my fate is all determined. Those are my parents who should not have been

llied to me: she is my wife, ev'n she,
I to me to wed;
I 125
I have slain him who gave me life, and now
I thee, O light! I take my last farewell,

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

O, hapless state of human race!
How quick the fleeting shadows pass
Of transitory bliss below,
Where all is vanity and wo!
y thy example taught, O prince! we see
lan was not made for true felicity.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Thou, Œdipus! beyond the rest
Of mortals wert supremely bless'd;
Whom every hand conspired to raise,
Whom every hand rejoiced to praise;
Then from the sphinx thy all-preserving hand
tretch'd forth its aid to save a sinking land.

1140

STROPHE II.

Thy virtues raised thee to a throne,
And grateful Thebes was all thy own:
Alas! how changed that glorious name!
Lost are thy virtues and thy fame.
low coulds thou thus pollute thy father's bed! 1145
low coulds thou thus thy hapless mother wed!

ANTISTROPHE II.

How could that bed unconscious bear
So long the vile, incestuous pair?
But Time, of quick and piercing sight,
Hath brought the horrid deed to light:
t length Jocasta owns her guilty flame,
nd finds a husband and a child the same.

EPODE.

Wretched son of Laius! thee Henceforth may I never see; But absent shed the pious tear, And weep thy fate with grief sincere!

For thou didst raise our eyes to life and light,

To close them now in everlasting night. [Escust.

ACT V.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

Mrs. Sages of Thebes, most honour'd and revered! If e'er the house of Labdacus was dear 1160 And precious to you, what will be your grief, When I shall tell the most disastrous tale You ever heard, and to your eyes present A spectacle more dreadful than they yet Did e'er behold! Not the wide Danube's waves, Nor Phasis' stream, can wash away the stains 1166 Of this polluted palace. The dire crimes, Long time conceal'd, at length are brought to light; But those which spring from voluntary guilt Are still more dreadful.

Cho. Nothing can be worse 1170
Than what we know already; bring'st thou more
Misfortunes to us?

MES. To be brief, the queen,

Jocasta, 's dead.

CHO. Say, by what hand?

Mrs. Her own;
And, what's more dreadful, no one saw the deed:
What I myself beheld, you all shall hear. 1175
Inflamed with rage, soon as she reach'd the palace,
Instant retiring to the nuptial bed,
She shut the door, then raved and tore her hair,
Called out on Laius dead, and bade him think
On that unhappy son who murder'd him, 1180
And stain'd his bed: then, turning her sad eyes

1165 The Ister or Danube is one of the most considerable rivers in Europe; which, passing by Illyricum, runs into the Euxine Sea. Phasis was a famous river in Colchis.

Upon the guilty couch, she cursed the place Where she had borne a husband from her husband. And children from her child: what follow'd then I know not, by the cries of Œdipus 1185 Prevented, for on him our eyes were fix'd Attentive: forth he came, beseeching us To lend him some sharp weapon, and inform him Where he might find his mother and his wife: His children's wretched mother and his own. 1190 Some ill-designing power did then direct him (For we were silent) to the queen's apartment: Forcing the bolt, he rush'd unto the bed, And found Jocasta, where we all beheld her, Entangled in the fatal noose; which, soon 1195 As he perceived, loosing the pendent rope, Deeply he groan'd; and, casting on the ground His wretched body, show'd a piteous sight To the beholders: On a sudden thence Starting, he pluck'd from off the robe she wore A golden buckle, that adorn'd her side, 1201 And buried in his eyes the sharpen'd point, Crying, he ne'er again would look on her, Never would see his crimes or miseries more, Or those whom, guiltless, he could ne'er behold, Or those to whom he now must sue for aid. His lifted evelids then, repeating still These dreadful plaints, he tore; while down his cheeks

Fell showers of blood: such fate the wretched pair Sustain'd, partakers in calamity; 1210 Fall'n from a state of happiness (for none Were happier once than they) to groans and death, Reproach, and shame, and every human wo.

Cho. And where is now the poor unhappy man?

MES. "Open the doors," he cries, "and let all
Thebes 1915

Behold his parents' murderer!" adding words Not to be uttered: banish'd now he says He must be, nor, devoted as he is By his own curse, remain in this sad place.
He wants a kind conductor, and a friend
To help him now, for 'tis too much to bear.
But you will see him soon; for lo! the doors
Are open'd, and you will behold a sight
That would to pity move his deadliest foe.

Enter CEDIPUS.

CHo. O horrid sight! more dreadful spectacle.
Than e'er these eyes beheld! What madness urged thee

To this sad deed? What power malignant heap'd On thy poor head such complicated wo? Unhappy man! Alas! I would have held Some converse with thee, but thy looks affright me: I cannot bear to speak to thee.

ŒDI. O me! 1231 Where am I, and whence comes the voice I hear!

Where art thou, fortune?

Changed to misery,

Dreadful to hear, and dreadful to behold.

CEDI. O cruel darkness! endless, hopeless night!

Shame, terrors, and unutterable wo!

1236

More painful is the memory of my crimes

Than all the wounds my wild distraction made.

Cно. Thus doubly cursed, O prince! I wonder not

At thy affliction.

CEDI. Art thou here, my friend ? 1240 I know thy voice: thou wouldst not leave the wretched:

Thou art my faithful, kind assistant still.

Сно. How couldst thou thus deprive thyself of sight?

What madness drove thee to the desperate deed? What god inspired?

ŒDI. Apollo was the cause; 1245

1245 By delivering the oracle which foretold that Œdipus should kill his father, and afterward pronouncing the dreadful sentence against the murderer

1260

He was, my friends, the cause of all my woes; But for these eyes, myself did quench their light; I want not them. What use were they to me, But to discover scenes of endless wo!

Сно. 'Tis but tob true.

CEDI. What pleasure now remains 1250
For CEdipus! He cannot joy in aught
To sight or ear delightful. Curse on him,
Whoe'er he was, that loosen'd my bound feet,
And saved me, in Cithæron's væle, from death!
I owe him nothing; had I perish'd then,
1255
Much happier had it been for you, my friends,
And for myself.

Cro. I too could wish thou hadst.

CEDI. I should not then have murdered Laius;

I had not ta'en Jocasta to my bed:
But now I am a guilty wretch, the son
Of a polluted mother, father now
To my own brother: all that's horrible

To nature is the lot of Œdipus.

Cho. Yet must I blame this cruel act; for, sure,

The loss of sight is worse than death itself. **CEDI.** I care not for thy counsel or thy praise: For with what eves could I have e'er beheld My honour'd father in the shades below, 1269 Or my unhappy mother, both destroy'd By me! This punishment is worse than death; And so it should be. Sweet had been the sight Of my dear children; them I could have wish'd To gaze on; but I must never see Or them, or this fair city, or the palace Where I was born: deprived of every bliss 1275 By my own lips, which doom'd to banishment The murderer of Laius, and expelled The impious wretch, by gods and men accursed:— Could I behold them after this? O, no! Would I could now with equal ease remove 1280 My hearing too, be deaf as well as blind,

And from another entrance shut out wo! To want our senses, in the hour of ill. Is comfort to the wretched. O Cithæron! Why didst thou e'er receive me, or, received, 1285 Why not destroy, that men might never know Who gave me birth? O Polybus! O Corinth! And thou, long time believed my father's palace! O, what a foul disgrace to human nature Didst thou receive beneath a prince's form! 1290 Impious myself, and from an impious race. Where is my splendour now! O Daulian path! The shady forest, and the narrow pass Where three ways meet, who drank a father's blood, Shed by these hands; do you not still remember The horrid deed, and what, when here I came, 1296 Follow'd more dreadful? Fatal nuptials! you Produced me, you returned me to the womb That bare me: thence relations horrible Of fathers, sons, and brothers came: of wives, Sisters, and mothers, sad alliance! all 1301 That man holds impious and detestable. But what in act is vile, the modest tongue Should never name. Bury me, hide me, friends, From every eye! destroy me, cast me forth To the wide ocean! let me perish there: Do any thing to shake off hated life. Seize me! approach, my friends! you need not fear, Polluted though I am, to touch me. None Shall suffer for my crimes but I alone. 1310 Cно. In most fit time, my lord, the noble Creon This way advances: he can best determine, And best advise; sole guardian now of Thebes, To him thy power devolves,

1288 That is, the palace of Polybus King of Corinth, the supposed father of Œdipus, who brought him up as his own, and educated him accordingly.

1308 Alluding to a superstitious notion among the ancients, that it was dangerous even to touch an accursed person, or one geemingly visited with misfortunes by the gods.

CEDI. What shall I say ! **

Can I apply to him for aid, whom late 1815

I deeply injured by unjust suspicion !

[Exit Messenger.]

Enter CREON.

CRE. I come not, prince, to triumph o'er thy woes With vile reproach; I pity thy misfortunes:
But, O my Thebans! if you do not fear
The censure of your fellow-citizens,
At least respect the all-creating eye
Of Phæbus, who beholds you thus exposing
To public view a wretch accursed, polluted,
Whom neither earth can bear, nor sun behold,
Nor holy shower besprinkle. Take him hence,
Within the palace: those who are by blood
United should alone be witnesses
Of such calamity.

CEDI. O Creon! thou
The best of men, and I the worst! How kind
Thou art to visit me! O! by the gods 1330
Let me entreat thee, since, beyond my hopes,
Thou art so good, now hear me: what I ask
Concerns thee most.

CRE.
Thus ardently!

CED. I beg thee banish me
From Thebes this moment, to some land remote,
Where I may ne'er converse with man again. 1336
CRE. Myself had long since done it, but the gods

What is it thou desirest

Must be consulted first.

CEDI. Their will is known Already, and their oracle declared
The guilty parricide should die.

CRE. It hath; 1340 But, as it is, 'twere better to inquire What must be done.

CED. For such a wretch as I, Wouldst thou again explore the will of Heaven \(\)

CRE. Thy hapless fate should teach us to believe And reverence the gods. Now, Creon, list: 1345 ŒDI. I beg thee, I conjure thee, let a tomb Be raised, and all due honours paid to her Who lies within. She was thy sister, Creon. It is a duty which thou owest: for me, I cannot hope this city now will deign 1350 To keep me here. O Creon! let me go. And seek the solitary mountain's top, My own Cithæron, by my parents doom'd Long since to be the grave of Œdipus: There would I die, as they decreed I should, 1355 Alas! I cannot, must not perish yet, Till I have suffer'd evils worse than death. For I was only saved to be unhappy: But I must meet my fate, whate'er it be. My sons are men, and wheresoever fortune 1360 May place them, cannot want the means of life. They shall not burden thee; but O, my friend! What will become of my unhappy daughters. With tenderest love, beneath a father's hand Cherish'd so long? O! take them to thy care. Thou best of men! O! might I but embrace them. But shed a tear o'er their disastrous fate: Might I be suffer'd but to touch them here: I should rejoice, and think I saw them still. But hark! methinks e'en now I hear the voice 1370 Of my dear daughters. Hath the gracious Creon. In pity to my woes, already brought My children to me? Is it so? CRE. It is: Thy wishes are prevented; they are here.

Enter DAUGHTERS OF EDIPUS.

CEDI. May Heaven reward thee for this goodness to me, 1375 And give thee much more bliss than I have known! Now, my dear children! come towards me, come

Towards your father and your-brother: see (* These sightless eyes, pierced by my own mad hands: Behold that wretched father who begat you Unknowingly on her who gave me birth. I cannot see you now; I can but weep Your fate, to think what hours of wretchedness You have to know hereafter. Whither now Must my poor children fly? From every feast, 1385 Joyless, with grief and shame, shall you return; And when the time shall come when riper years Should give you to the nuptial bed, who then, Careless of fame, will let his child partake The infamy of my abhorred race, 1390 Sprung from a wretch accursed, who kill'd his father. And from the womb that bare him did beget You, my unhappy daughters? Such reproach Must still be yours, to virgin solitude Devoted ever and a barren bed. 1395 Son of Menœceus! thou alone art left Their father now: for O! Jocasta's dead. And I am—nothing: do not then forsake Thy kindred; nor, deserted and forlorn, Suffer them still, in penury and wo, 1400 To wander helpless, in their tender age. Remember, they have no support but thee. O generous prince! have pity on them; give me Thy friendly hand in promise of thy aid. To you, my daughters! had your early years 1405 Permitted, I had given my last advice: Too young for counsel, all I ask of you Is but to pray the gods that my sad life May not be long; but yours, my children! crown'd With many days, and happier far than mine. CRE. It is enough: go in; thy grief transports thee

Beyond all bounds.

ČEDI.- 'Tis hard, but I submit. Cre. The time demands it; therefore go.

CED1. O Creon!
Know'st thou what now I wish!
CRE. What is it? Speak.
ŒDI. That I may quit this fatal place.
CRE. Thou ask'st
What Heaven alone can grant.
Œpi. Alas! to Heaven 1416
I am most hateful.
CRE. Yet shalt thou obtain
What thou desirest.
Œpi. Shall I indeed?
CRE. Thou shalt:
I never say aught that I do not mean. 1419
ŒDI. Then let me go: may I depart?
CRE. Thou mayst;
But leave thy children.
Œpi. Do not take them from me.
CRE. Thou must not always have thy will; already
Thou hast suffer'd for it.
Cно. Thebans! now behold
The great, the mighty Œdipus, who once
The sphinx's dark enigma could unfold; 1425
Who less to fortune than to wisdom owed;
In virtue, as in rank, to all superior;
Yet fallen at last to deepest misery.
Let mortals hence be taught to look beyond
The present time, nor dare to say a man 1439
Is happy, till the last decisive hour
Shall close his life without the teste of wo.

ŒDIPUS COLONEUS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CEDIFUS.
CREON.
ANTIGONS, } daughters of Œdipus.
ISMENE,
POLYNICHS, SON OF Œdipus.
THEREUS, king of Athens.
AN ATHENIAN.
MESSENGEE.
ATTENDANTS ON Creon, Theseus, and Ismena.
CHORUS, composed of ancient men of Athens.

ŒDIPUS COLONEUS.

ARGUMENT.

This tragedy is a continuation of the history of Œdipus; who, condemned to perpetual banishment from Thebes, arrived at last with his daughter Antigone, at Coloneus, a little hill in the neighbourhood of Athens sacred to the Furies, where he solicited and obtained the protection of King Theseus. In this retreat he was overtaken by his daughter ismene. In the mean time, Creon, having learned from the oracle that prosperity awaited the country which should possess the bones of Œdipus, endeavoured to remove him by entreaty or force; but the power of Theseus soon compelled him to relinquish the attempt. At this juncture Polynices arrived, with the design of reconciling his father to his intended invasion of Thebes; but the exiled monarch uttered the bitterest imprecations on his impious purpose, and prophesied the horrible fate which awaited him. Finding his end fast approaching, he sent for Theseus, and informed him that an uninterrupted course of prosperity would befall Athens so long as his burial-place was revealed to no one but the reigning monarch of the country. Having then dismissed his daughters, and being left alone with Theseus, he resigned himself to his fate; while the king faithfully complied with his injunctions of concealing the circumstances of his death and interment.

ACT I.

Scene, a grove, at the entrance to the temple of the Furies.

CEDIPUS, ANTIGONE.

CEDI. Where are we now, my dear Antigone? Know'st thou the palace! Will any here afford Their scanty alms to a poor wanderer, The banish'd Œdipus! I ask not much,

Yet less receive: but I am satisfied: 5 Long time hath made my woes familiar to me. And I have learn'd to bear calamity. But tell me, daughter! if thou seest a place Or sacred, or profane, where I may rest: There set me down; from some inhabitant 10 A chance but we may learn where now we are, And act (so strangers ought) as he directs us. Ant. O, Œdipus! my poor, unhappy father! Far as my eyes can reach, I see a city, With lofty turrets crown'd; and, if I err not, 15 This place is sacred, by the laurel shade, Olive and vine thick planted, and the songs

This place is sacred, by the laurel shade,
Olive and vine thick planted, and the songs
Of nightingale sweet warbling through the grove.
Here sit thee down, and rest thy wearied limbs
On this rude stone; 'tis a long way for age
Like thine to travel.

ŒDI. Place me here, and guard

A sightless wretch.

Ant. Alas! at such a time Thou need'st not tell Antigone her duty. Œd. Know'st thou not where we are?

Ant. As I have learn'd

From passing travellers, not far from Athens; 25
The place I know not. Would you that I go,
And straight inquire? But now I need not leave
thee,

For, lo! a stranger comes this way; ev'n now He stands before you: he will soon inform us.

Enter an ATHENIAN.

ŒDI. Stranger! thou com'st in happy hour to tell us 30
What much we wish to know; let me then ask thee—
Атн. Ask nothing: speak not till thou art removed
From off that hallow'd spot where now thou stand'st,
By human footsteps not to be profaned.

ŒDI. To whom then is it sacred?

ATH. "Tis a place, 35 Where but to tread is impious, and to dwel Forbidden: where the dreadful goddesses, Daughters of Earth and Night, alone inhabit. ŒDI. Ha! let me hear their venerable names.

ATH. By other names in other climes adored, 40 The natives here call them Eumenides, The all-seeing Powers.

ŒDI. O! that they would but smile Propitious, and receive a suppliant's prayer, That I might never leave this blest abode!

ATH. What dost thou mean !

CEDI. It suits my sorrows well. 45
ATH. I must inform the citizens; till then

Remain.

ŒDI. O! do not scorn a wretched exile, But tell me, stranger!—

ATH. Speak; I scorn thee not. ŒDI. What place is this?

ATH. I'll tell you what I know.
This place is sacred all: great Neptune here 50
Presides, and he who bears the living fire,
Titan Prometheus; where thou tread'st, is called
The brazen way, the bulwark of our state:
From this equestrian hill, their safest guard,
The neighbouring villagers their general name 55
Derive, thence called Colonians all.

ŒDI. But say.

Are there who dwell here then !

37 These dreadful goddesses were the three Furies, Alecto,

Megæra, and Tisiphone.

52 Prometheus, according to the tales of the heathens concerning him, was supposed to have stolen fire from heaven, and with it to have made men; for which impiety he was punished by the gods in the same manner as the rebellious Titans; he is therefore called, in this place, Titan Prometheus.

53 Near this brazen way was supposed to be the passage to Hades, or the shades, by which Pluto conveyed the ravished

Proserpine to his dominions.

ATH.	There are, and called
From him they worship	0.
Œpi	Is the power supreme
Lodged in the people's	voice, or in the king?
Aтн. Tis in the king	,
Œpi.	Who is he?
Атн.	Theseus, son 60
Of Ægeus, their last so	
ŒDI.	Who will go
And tell him—	Who will go
	o come and meet thee here!
	t a little help bestow'd
Would amply be repaid	
ATH.	Why, what couldst thou do
Dark as thou art !	1 '11 41 65
	words will not be so. 65
	that thou err not; for to me
Thy fortune seems ill s	
Which is most noble;	herefore stay thou here
Till I return; I will not	go to Athens,
But ask these villagers,	
If thou mayst stay.	[Exit Athenian.
ŒDI. My	daughter, is he gone?
ANT. He is, and thou	mayst safely speak, for I
Alone am with thee.	
Œdi.	Goddesses revered :
	wearied steps have found
Their first repose, not in	
On Phœbus and on me!	For know, the god
Who 'gainst unhappy (I	
Unnumber'd woes, foret	
I should have rest, with	
These hospitable shade	
A life of misery. "Ha	ony those " he said
"Who should receive m	opy mose, he said,
And we to them who st	ne, glorious their reward;
Inhuman ." this ha ween	niced to confirm
Inhuman:" this he pror	nised to confirm
By signs undoubted; th	
<i>Of drea</i> dful earthq ua ke,	or the lightning's blast

Launch'd from the arm of Jove: I doubt it not: From you some happy omen hither led My prosperous steps. That first to you he came Pure to the pure, and here on this rude seat Reposed me, could not be the work of chance. Wherefore, ye Powers! as Phœbus hath decreed. Here let me find a period of my woes, Here end my wretched life; unless the man, Who long hath groan'd beneath the bitterest ills 95 That mortals feel, still seem to merit more. Daughters of ancient Night! O, hear me now! And thou, from great Minerva call'd the best And noblest city, Athens! pity me; Pity the shadow of poor Œdipus! 100 For, O! I am not what I was. No more;

Behold, a venerable band approach
Of ancient natives, come perchance to seek thee.
ŒDI. I've done; Antigone! remove me hence,
And hide me in the grove, till, by their words, 105
Listening I learn their purpose; such foreknowledge
Will best direct us how to act hereafter. [Exeunt.

Enter CHORUS.

Cho. Where is he? Look, examine, search around For this abandon'd exile, of mankind
The most profane, doubtless some wretched stranger:
Who'else had dared on this forbidden soil
111
To tread, where dwell the dreadful deities
We tremble ev'n to name; and as we pass,
Dare not behold, but silently revere,
Or soft with words of fairest omen greet?
Of these regardless, here we come to find
An impious wretch. I look around the grove,
But still he lurks unseen.

Enter ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE.

Em. Behold me here; For by your words I find you look for me.

CHO. [looking steadfastly at him.] Dreadful his voice. and terrible his aspect! Office. I am no outlaw; do not look thus on me. CHO. Jove the defender! Who is this old man! CEDI. One on whom Fortune little hath bestow'd To call for reverence from you; that, alas! Is but too plain: thus by another's eyes 125 Conducted here, and on her aid depending, Old as I am. Alas! and wert thou born CHO. Thus sightless? Full of sorrow and of years Indeed thou seem'st; but do not let on us Thy curse devolve: thou hast transgress'd the bounds Prescribed to mortals: shun the hallow'd grove. 131 Where, on the grassy surface, to the powers A welcome offering flows, with honey mix'd, The limpid stream; unhappy stranger! hence, Away, begone: thou seest 'tis a long space Divides us. Dost thou hear me, wretched exile! This instant, if thou dost, depart: then speak, But not before. Œn. Antigone, my daughter! What's to be done? Obey the citizens: Give me thy hand. ŒDI. I will; and now, my friends! 140 Confiding thus in you, and thus removing, As you directed, let me not be injured. Cно. Thou shalt not: be assured, that thou art safe: None shall offend or drive thee hence. Œn. Yet more Must I approach? A little farther still. Сно. 145 Œdi. Will this suffice? Remove him this way, virgin! CHO. Thou hear'st us. Ant. Thou must follow me, my father! Weak as thou art: we are unhappy strangers.

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And must submit: whate'er the city hates
Content to hate, and what she loves to love.
                                               150
  ŒDI. Lead me, my daughter! to some hallow'd
      spot
For mutual converse fit, nor let us strive
With dire necessity.
                      Stop there, nor move
Beyond that stone.
  Œnt.
                    Thus then?
  Сно.
                                 It is enough.
  ŒDI. Where shall I sit.
                          A little forward lean 155
And rest thee there.
                                [taking hold of him.
                      Alas! 'tis my sad office
  ANT.
(Let me perform it) to direct thy steps;
To this loved hand commit thy aged limbs:
I will be careful.
                          she seats him on the stone.
                  O unhappy state!
  CHO. Now, wretched stranger! tell us who thou
                                              160
Thy country and thy name.
  Œdi.
                             Alas, my lords!
A poor abandon'd exile; but, O! do not—
  Сно. What say'st thou ?
  Œdi.
                         Do not ask me who I am;
Inquire no farther.
  Čно.
                    Wherefore?
  ŒDI.
                                My sad race-
  Cно. Speak on.
  ŒDI. [turning to Antigone.] My daughter! how
      shall I proceed?
                                               165
  Cно. Thy race, thy father—
  Œdi.
                                O Antigone!
What do I suffer?
                    Speak, thou canst not be
More wretched than thou art.
  Œdi.
                               I will, for, O!
It cannot be conceal'd.
                        You do delay:
  CHO.
Inform us straight.
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SOPHOCLES.

(Edi. Know you the son of Laius ? 170
Cно. Alas!
ŒDI. The race of Labdacus !
Cho. O Jove!
ŒDI. The unhappy Œdipus.
Cно. And art thou he !
ŒDI. Be not affrighted at my words.
Cно. O heaven!
ŒDI. Wretch that I am! What will become of
me !
Cно. Away! begone! fly from this place!
ŒDI. Then where 175
Are all your promises? are they forgotten?
Сно. Justice divine will never punish those
Who but repay the injury they receive:
And fraud doth merit fraud for its reward.
Wherefore begone, and leave us, lest once more 180
Our city be compell'd to force thee hence.
Ant. O my kind friends! as you revere the name
Of virtue, though you will not hear the prayers
Of my unhappy father, worn with age,
And laden with involuntary crimes; 185
Yet hear the daughter pleading for her sire,
And pity her, who with no evil eye
Beholds you, but, as one of the same race,
Born of one common father, here entreats
Your mercy to the unhappy; for on you, 190
As on some god alone, we must rely.
Then grant this wish'd-for boon; O! grant it now;
By all that's dear to thee, thy sacred word,
Thy interest, thy children, and thy god:
'Tis not in mortal to avoid the crime 195
Which Heaven hath pre-ordain'd.
Cно. We pity thee,
Daughter of Œdipus! we pity him,
And his misfortunes; but, of wrath divine
Still fearful, dare not alter our decree.
ŒDI. Now who shall trust to glory and fair fame!
onen arms as provi end ten tent

What shall it profit, that your pious city 201 Was once for hospitable rites renown'd, That she alone would pity and relieve The afflicted stranger? Is she so to me. Who drives me hence, and trembles at a name! 205 Me you can never fear; and for my crimes, I am the sufferer, not the offender. What Touching my father I have spoke (alas! If 'tis for that you do abhor me thus). Was I to blame? The injury received 210 I but repaid, and therefore had I known The crime I acted, I were guiltless still. Whither I came, I came unknowingly; Not so they acted who have banish'd me. By your commands already here removed, 215 O! by the gods, preserve, assist me now: If you revere them, do not thus despise What they decree; their eyes behold the good, And view the evil man, nor shall the wicked Escape their wrath: use not their sacred names 220 To cover crimes, and stain the fame of Athens. As you receive the suppliant, O! remember Your plighted faith, preserve me, save me now : Look not contemptuous on this wretched form. Or cast reproach unmerited: I come Nor impious nor profane; and with me bring To Athens much of profit and renown, As, when your king arrives, you all shall know: Meantime despise me not. Old man! thy words Сно.

Are full of weight, and merit our observance. If those who here preside but know thy purpose,

It doth suffice.

Œdi. But say, where is the king? Сно. Within his palace; but a messenger Is gone to fetch him hither.

Œdi. O my friends! Think you a sightless wretch like me will move 235 His pity or his care, that he will come?

Cho. Most readily, when he shall hear the name Of Œdipus.

And who shall tell it him? Œdi.

Cно. The journey's long; but passing travellers Will watch the tale, and he must hear it soon. Fear not: thy story is already known .

On every side; 'twill quicken his slow steps,

And bring him instant hither.

May he come Œdi. In happy hour to Athens and to me! 244 He will; what good man doth not love his country? Ant. O Jove! what shall I say or think! My

father! ŒDI. What says my daughter?

This way bent, behold. On a Sicilian steed, a woman comes,

Her face conceal'd by a Thessalian vail. To shield her from the sun. Am I deceived.

250 Or is it she! I know not what to think.

It is my sister; now she smiles upon me:

It must, it can be none but my Ismene.

Œdi. Who! my Antigone?

Ant. It is thy daughter, My sister; but her voice will soon convince thee. 255

Enter ISMENE and ATTENDANT.

Ism. O the sweet sounds! a father and a sister! What pains have I not suffer'd in the search. And now for grief can scarce behold you! Œdi.

My daughter! art thou here?

Alas, my father!

How terribly thou look'st!

From the same blood 260 The father and the daughter.

Wretched race! ŒDI. And art thou come, my daughter?

Ism. , I have reach'd thee

With toil and labour.

Touch me, O my child! lsm. Let me embrace you both. Œdi. Both miserable! Ism. [they all embrace.] Join then a third as wretched as yourselves. Œdi. Ismene! wherefore art thou come! My care For thee, my father! brought me here. Œdi. For me? Ism. That I might speak to thee: this faithful slave Alone conducted me. [pointing to her Attendant. Thy brother, say, ŒDI. What are they doing? They are—what they are: 270 For, O! between them deadliest discord reigns. **Edu.** How like the unmanly sons of Egypt's clime, Where the men sit inglorious at the loom, And to their wives leave each domestic care! Ev'n thus, my sons! who should have labour'd for 275 Like women idly sit at home, while you Perform their office, and with filial care Attend a wretched father: this kind maid, pointing to Antigone. Ev'n from her infant days, hath wander'd long An exile with me, and supported still 280 My feeble age; oft through the savage woods, Naked and hungry, by the wintry storms, Or scorching heats afflicted, led me on, And gave me food unmindful of her own. Thou too, Ismene! wert my faithful guard, 285 When I was driven forth: and now art come To tell thy father what the gods declare. A stranger now to Thebes, I know not what Hath pass'd between them: thou hast some sad news, I know thou hast, to tell thy wretched father. Ism. What I have suffer'd in the search of thee, I pass in silence o'er, since to repeat Were but, alas! to double my misfortunes.

8оги.--С с

I only came to tell thee the sad fate Of thy unhappy sons; awhile they seem'd 295 As if they meant to yield the throne to Creon, Nor stain their guilty hands with Theban blood. Mindful of that pollution which remained On thy devoted race; but now some god, Or their own wicked minds, have raised a flame Of dire contention, which shall gain the power Supreme, and reign in Thebes: Eteocles Hath drove his elder Polynices forth, Who, now an exile, seeks (as Fame reports) The Argians, and, in solemn contract join'd 305 With these his new allies, would raise their fame Above the stars, and sink our Thebes in ruin. These are not words alone, 'tis now in act. Alas! ev'n now I fear ; nor know I when The gods will take compassion on thy woes. 310 ŒDI. Hast thou no hope they'll pity me? I have; Their oracles have said it. ŒDI. Ha! said what. My daughter? Tell me, what have they declared? Ism. The time would come, they said, when Thebes once more Must seek thee, dead or living, for her safety. CEDI. Why, what could such a wretch as I do for them? Ism. Their only hope, they say, is placed in thee. Œdi. I, that am nothing, grown so powerful! Whence Can it proceed? The gods, who once depress'd thee, Now raise thee up again. 320 ŒDI. It cannot be: Who falls in youth will never rise in age. Ism. Know, for this very purpose Creon comes; Ere long thou mayst expect him. What to do, Œdi. My daughter?

Ism. To remove thee hence, and place thee Nearer to Thebes, but not within her borders. ŒDI. If not within her walls, what can it be To them ?

Tam. Thy tomb, raised in a foreign land, They fear would prove most fatal.

ŒDI. But how know they

It must be so, unless some god declared it?

Ism. For this alone they wish to have thee near The borders, in their power, and not thy own. 331 **CEP1.** To bury me at Thebes?

Ism. That cannot be:

Thy crime forbids it.

Œdi. Then I'll never go.

Ism. A time will come when they shall feel thy vengeance.

ŒDI. What strange vicissitude can e'er produce

This wish'd event?

Thy wrath, when at thy tomb

They shall be forced to meet. Who told thee this? Œdi.

Ismene, say.
The sacred ministers

Of Delphi. Œdi. Came it from Apollo's shrine? Ism. On their return to Thebes they did report it. ŒDI. My sons, did they hear aught of this? 341 Both heard.

And know it well.

Yet, impious as they are, Œdi. Preferr'd a kingdom to their father's love.

Ism. With grief I tell thee what with grief I heard. CEDI. O! may the gods doom them to endless strife! 345

Ne'er may the battle cease, till Œdipus Himself shall end it! Then, nor he who bears The sceptre now should long maintain the throne, Nor Polynices e'er to Thebes return: They should not live, who drove a parent forth 350

To misery and exile; left by those Who should have loved, supported, and revered I know they say, the city but complied	him.
With my request; I ask'd for banishment, Nor then I ask'd it: in my desperate mind, When first I raged, I wish'd indeed for death; It had been grateful then: but no kind friend Would minister the boon: at length, my grief	355
Gave way; and when they saw my troubled so	ul
Had taken ample vengeance on itself,	360
After long stay, the city drove me forth;	
And those who could have saved me, my base s	ons,
Deaf to a father's prayers, permit me still	
To roam abroad, in poverty and exile:	
From these alone, far as their tender sex	365
Can help me, I receive the means of life,	
All the sweet comfort, food, or needful rest	
Earth can afford me now; while to my sons 'A throne was dearer than a father's love.	
But they shall never gain me for their friend,	370
Ne'er reign in Thebes; these oracles declare	310
They never shall. I do remember too	
Another prophecy, which Phœbus erst	
Deliver'd to me: let 'em send their Creon.	
Or any other powerful citizen,	375
To drag me hence: my hospitable friends,	• • •
If to these all-protecting deities	
Who here preside, you too will lend your aid,	
Athens shall find in me its best defence,	
And vengeance strike the foes of Œdipus.	380
Cно. Thou and thy daughters well deserve	our
pity;	
And, for thy words are full of promised good	
To our loved city, I will tell thee all	
"Tis meet thou shouldst perform.	
ŒDI. My best of frie	
Instruct me; I am ready to obey.	385
Cho. An expiation instant must thou make	
To the offended powers, whose sacred seat	
Thou hast profaned.	

Œ DI. But how must it be done?
Сно. First, with pure hands from the ever-flowing spring,

Thy due libations pour.

ŒDI. What follows then? 390 Сио. Take thou a cup wrought by some skilful hand;

Bind it with wreaths around.

ŒDI. Of leaves or threads

Composed?

Cro. Of wool, fresh from the new-shorn lamb. CEDI. Is there aught else?

Cно. Then, turning to the sun.

Make thy libations.

CEDI. From the cup, thou say'st? 395 CHO. The water from three fountains drawn; and last,

Remember, none be left.

ŒDI. With that alone

Must it be fill'd?

Сно. Water with honey mix'd.

No wine; this pour on the earth-

Сы. What then remains?
 Сно. Take in thy hand of olive boughs thrice nine;
 And offering these, begin thy humble prayer. 401
 Сы. But how address them! That concerns me

Сно. Their name, thou know'st, implies benevo-

Entreat them, therefore, kindly now to prove
Benevolent to thee; this by thyself,
Or by another for thee but, remember,
Low be the voice, and short the supplication.
That done, return; be careful to perform it.

I may assist thee then with confidence;

But, if thou dost it not, must tremble for thee. 410 CEDL My daughters, heard you this?

Ant. We did; command. What's to be done.

Cc2

Œni. What I can never do. Powerless and blind as I am; one of you, My daughters, must perform it. ANT. One alone May do the task of many, when the mind 415 Is active in it. Hence then, quick, away; ŒDI. But do not leave me here alone: these limbs, Without a guide will never find their way. Ism. Father! I go: but how to find the place. I know not. Сно. Stranger! t'other side of the grove: 420 There, some inhabitant will soon inform thee, If thou shouldst want assistance or instruction. Ism. Meantime, Antigone! remain thou here, And guard our father well: cares are not cares When we endure them for a parent's sake. Cно. Stranger! albeit we know 'tis most ungrate-To raise the sad remembrance of past woes, Yet would we gladly hear-What wouldst thou know! Cно. The cause of thy unhappy state. ŒDI. Alas! 430 By all the sacred hospitable rites, I beg thee do not ask me to reveal it; My crimes are horrible. Already fame Hath spread them wide, and still talks loudly of them: Tell us the truth. ŒDI. Alas! Сно. Let me beseech thee. ŒDI. O me! Comply: ask what thou wilt of me. Сно. And thou shalt have it. l have suffer'd much: **43**6 The gods can witness, 'twas against my will: I knew not of it.

Сно.	Knew not what?	
ŒDI.	The city,	
Unknowing to	o, bound me in horrid nuptials.	
Cно. And di	dst thou then pollute, as fame rep	orts,
Thy mother's	bed ?	•
ŒDΙ	O death to hear! I did:	441
Here, here the	y are.	
Сно.	Who's there?	
Œdi.	My crimes! my daugh	ters!
Cно. Daugh	ters and sisters of their father !	0!
'Tis horrible in		
Œdi.	Tis wo on wo.	
Сно. Great	Jove! both daughters of one ha	pless
mother!		445
What hast thou	a suffer'd!	
ŒDI.	Ills not to be borne!	
Сно. Didst t	hou then perpetrate the horrid d	eed?
Œdi. O no.	• • '	•
Сно. N	lot do it?	
Œdi.	I received from Thebe	86
A fátal gift; w	ould I had never taken it!	449
Сно. And ar	t thou not a murderer too?	
Œdi.	What's	that
Thou say'st?		
Сно. Т	hy father—	
Œdi.	Thou add'st grief to g	rief.
Сно. Didst tl	hou not murder him ?	
Œdi.	I did: but he	ar-
Сно. Hear w	hat ?	
Œpt.	The cause.	
Сно.	What cause ?	
Œdi.	I'll tell thee: know t	hen,
[murder'd other	ers too; yet by the laws	•
I stand absolve	d: 'twas done in ignorance.	455
CHO. Seeing	Theseus, who enters.] But, lo!	the
king. Æ	rean Theseus, comes:	
The fame of th	ee hath brought him here alread	y.
	•	•

449 Meaning the throne of Thebes, with Jocasta, whom he married.

THE O son of Laius! long ere this the tale Of thy disastrous fate, by many a tongue Related, I had heard; thy eyes torn forth By thy own desperate hand, and now I see It was too true; thy garb, and dreadful aspect Speak who thou art. Unhappy Œdipus,
I come to ask in pity to thy woes, What's thy request to Athens or to me; 465
Thine, or this hapless virgin on thy steps
Attendant, speak; for large must be the boon
I would refuse thee: I have known too well
(Myself a wretched wanderer) the woes
Of cruel exile, not to pity thine. 470
Of toils and dangers, in a foreign land,
Much have I suffer'd; therefore not to me
Shall the poor stranger ever sue in vain
For aid and safety; mortals as we are, Uncertain ever is to-morrow's fate, 475
Alike unknown to Theseus and to thee.
ŒDI. Theseus! thy words declare thy noble
nature,
And leave me little to reply: thou know'st
My story, whom and whence I am; no more
Remains, but that I tell thee my request, 480
And we have done.
THE. Proceed then, and inform me.
ŒDI. I come to give this wretched body to thee,
To sight ungracious, but of worth more dear
To thee than fairest forms could boast. The. What worth?
ŒDI. Hereafter thou shalt know, not now.
THE. But when 485
Shall we receive it?
ŒDI. When I am no more;
When thou shalt bury me.
THE. Death is, it seems,
Thy chief concern, and life not worth thy care.
Œni. That will procure me all the means of life.

THE. And is this all thou ask'st, this little boon? CEDI. Not little is the strife which shall ensue. 491 THE. What strife! with whom! thy children or mv own ?

ŒDI. Mine, Theseus! they would have me back to Thebes.

THE. And wouldst thou rather be an exile here! ŒDI. Once they refused me.

THE.

Anger suits but ill With low estate and miseries like thine. 496 ŒDI. Hear first, and then condemn me. Тне. Not unheard

All thou canst urge, would I reprove thee : speak. ŒDI. O Theseus! I have borne the werst of ills.

THE. The curses on thy race?

O no; all Greece ŒDI.

Hath heard of them.

What more than mortal wo 501 THE.

Afflicts thee then?

Ev'n this; my cruel sons Have driven me from my country: never more Must Thebes receive a parricide.

Why then \cdot

Recall thee now, if thou must ne'er return? 505 Œpi. Commanded by an oracle divine.

THE. Why, what doth it declare ! That Thebes shall yield

To thee and to thy arms. But whence shall spring .

Such dire contention?

ŒDI. Dearest son of Ægeus! From age and death exempt, the gods alone 510 Immortal and unchangeable remain, While all things else fall by the hand of Time. The universal conqueror: earth laments Her fertile powers exhausted; human strength Is withered soon; ev'n faith and truth decay, And from their ashes fraud and falsehood rise: Nor friendship long from man to man endures,

Or realm to realm: to each successive rise; Bitter and sweet, and happiness and wo. Athens and Thebes thou seest united now, And all is well; but passing time shall bring The fatal day (and slight will be the cause) That soon shall change the bonds of amity And holy faith, for feuds and deadliest hate.	3 0
Then buried long in earth, shall this cold corse 5: Drink their warm blood, which from the mutu wound	25 al
Frequent shall flow: it must be as I tell thee, If Jove be Jove, and great Apollo true. But why should I reveal the fix'd decree	30
To end where I began: thy plighted faith Once more confirm; and never shalt thou say The wretched Œdipus to Theseus came A useless and unprofitable guest,	ου
If the immortal gods have not deceived me. 55 Сно. O king! already hath this man declared The same good will to thee and to our country. Тнв. Can I reject benevolence and love	35
Like this, my friends? O no; the common rites Of hospitality, this altar here, The witness of our mutual vows, forbid it. He comes a suppliant to these goddesses, And pays no little tribute both to me And to my kingdom: he shall find a seat	10
	45 .s.
'Tis my command you guard this stranger well. If thou wouldst rather go with me, thou mayst; I leave it to thy choice. [to Œdipu ŒDI. Reward them, Jove! THE. What says't thou, wilt thou follow me? ŒDI. I would, 55 If it were lawful; but it must be here; This is the place—	ıs.

For what? I'll not deny thee— ŒDI. Where I must conquer those who banish'd me. THE. That would be glory and renown to this, Thy place of refuge. If I may depend Œdi. 555 On thy fair promise. Fear not, I shall never Betray my friend. I will not bind thee to it Œdi. By oath, like those whom we suspect of ill. THE. Thou need'st not, Œdipus! my word's my oath. ŒDI. How must I act then? THE. Fear'st thou aught? Œdi. I do; 560 A force will come against me. Here's thy guard; THE. [Pointing to the Chorus. These shall protect thee. If thou goest, remember And save me, Theseus! Teach not me my duty. Œdi. Still am I fearful. Theseus is not so. 'ŒDI. Know'st thou not what they threaten'd? This I know. No power on earth shall wrest thee from this place. Ofttimes the angry soul will vent its wrath In idle threats, with high and empty words; Which ever, as the mind is to itself Restored, are—nothing; they may boast their strength, And say they'll tear thee from me; but I tell thee, The journey would be long and tedious to them. They will not hazard it: they dare not: therefore

Be comforted; for if, by Phoebus sent;

aid.

Thou hither camest, thou art safe without my

Ev'n if I leave thee safe; for know, the name Of Theseus here sufficeth to protect thee. [Exit Theseus

CHORUS.

STROPHE 1.

Thou art come in hanny time

Thou art come in nappy time,	
Stranger! to this blissful clime,	
Long for swiftest steeds renown'd,	580
Fertilest of the regions round,	
Where, beneath the ivy shade,	
In the dew-besprinkled glade,	
Many a love-lorn nightingale	
Warbles sweet her plaintive tale;	585
Where the vine in clusters pours	
Her sweets, secured from wintry showers;	
Nor scorching suns, nor raging storm	
The beauties of the year deform;	
ANTISTROPHE I.	
Where the sweet narcissus growing,	590
Where the yellow crocus blowing,	
Round the sacred altars twine,	
Off'ring to the powers divine;	
Where the pure springs perpetual flow,	
Wat'ring the verdant meads below,	5 95
Which, with its earth-enriching waves	
The fair Cephisus ever laves;	
Where, with his ever-sporting train,	
Bacchus wantons on the plain,	
Pleased with the muses still to rove,	600
And golden Venus, queen of love.	
STROPHE II.	
Alone within this happy land,	
Planted here by Nature's hand,	
Which nor Asia's fertile plains,	
Nor Pelops' spacious isle contains,	605
Pallas! thy sacred olive grows,	
Striking terror on our foes;	

[Exeunt.

Ever free from hostile rage. From wanton youth, or greedy age; Happy in sage Minerva's love, 610 And guarded still by Morian Jove. ANTISTROPHE II. But nobler gifts and fairer fame. . Athens! yet adorn thy name: Such wondrous gifts hath poured on thee Thy great protecting deity. 615 . Here first, obedient to command. Form'd by Neptune's skilful hand, The steed was taught to know the rein. And bear the chariot o'er the plain; Here first along the rapid tide 620 The stately vessels learn'd to ride, And swifter down the current flow

ACT II.

Than Nereids cut the waves below.

ANTIGONE, CEDIPUS, CHORUS.

Ant. Great are thy praises, Attica! and now 694 he time is come to show thou dost deserve them.

(Ed. What means my daughter! Speak: what

new event

Ant. Creon, with a numerous band of followers, comes this way.

GEDI. O, now, my friends!

Fever, help me.

Оно.

Fear not; we'll protect thee
hough I am old, the strength of Attica

not decay'd.

Enter CREON, with ATTENDANTS.

CRE. Most honour'd citizens!
see you look with eyes of fear upon me,
Vithout a cause; for know, I came not here,
Sopn.—D d

Intending aught of violence or ill	
Against a city so renown'd in Greece 65	35
As yours hath ever been; I only came,	
Commission'd by the state of Thebes, to fetch	
This old man back, if by persuasion mild	
I could induce him to return; not sent	
By one alone, but the united voice	10
Of a whole people, who assign'd the task	
To me, because, by blood united to him,	
I felt for his misfortunes as my own.	
Come, therefore, Œdipus! attend me home;	
Thebes calls thee back; thy kingdom now demand	ds
	15
By me she calls thee: listen to thy friend;	
For surely Creon were the worst of men,	
If he could look on woes like thine unmoved:	
When I behold thee in a foreign land,	
A wretched wand'rer, forced to beg thy bread, 68	50
From place to place, with this unhappy maid,	
Whom little did I think to see exposed	
To misery and shame, of nuptial rites	
Hopeless, and thus bereft of every aid.	
O! 'tis reproach and infamy to us 69	55
And to our race; but 'tis already known,	
And cannot be concealed. O Œdipus!	
I here beseech thee, by our country's gods,	
Return to Thebes; bid thou a kind farewell	
	BO
But still remember thy own dearer country.	
ŒDI. Thou daring hypocrite! whose specious	18
wiles	
Beneath fair semblance mean but to betray,	
Why wouldst thou tempt me thus? why thus one	e
more	
	85
More wretched than I am ! Long time oppress'd	
By heaviest woes, I pined within my palace,	
And longed for exile; but thou then refusedst	
To let me go, till satiated with grief,	

My soul at length was calm, and much I wish'd 670 To spend my few remaining years at home. Then thou (for little did the kindred blood Thou talk'st of then avail) didst banish me: And now again thou com'st to make me wretched: Because thou seest this kind benignant city 675 Embrace and cherish, thou wouldst drag me hence, With sweetest words cov'ring thy bitter mind, Professing love to those who choose it not. He who denies his charitable aid To the poor beggar in his utmost need, 680 And, if abundance comes, should offer that Which is not wanted, little merits thanks. Such is thy bounty now, in word alone. And not in deed, the friend of Œdipus. But I will tell them what thou art: thou camest not To take me hence, but leave me in the borders 686 Of Thebes, that so thy kingdom may escape The impending ills which this avenging city Shall pour upon it: but 'twill come to pass As I foretold; my evil genius still 690 Shall haunt thee, and my sons no more of Thebes Inherit than shall serve them for a grave. Thy country's fate is better known to me Than to thyself, for my instruction comes From surer guides, from Phæbus and from Jove. 695 Thy artful speech shall little serve thy purpose; "Twill only hurt thy cause: therefore, begone; I am not to be persuaded. Let me live In quiet here; for, wretched as I am. "Twill be some comfort to be far from thee. 700 Cre. Think'st thou I heed thy words? suffer most For this perverseness, thou or I? I trust (Kar Thy little arts will naught avail with me Or with my friends. Poor wretch! no time can cure Cre. Thy follies: thy old age is grown delirious.

Œpi. Thou hast a hateful tongue; but few. how iust

Soe'er they be, can always speak aright.

CRE. But to say much, and to say well, are things Which differ widely.

What thou say'st, no doubt, Œni.

Is brief and proper too.

'Twill hardly seem so 710

To those who think like thee. ŒDI.

Away, nor dare Direct my steps, as if thou hadst the power To place me where thou wilt.

Remember all

To witness this, for he shall answer it

When he is mine.

But who shall force me hence 715 Against the will of these my friends?

Their aid Cre.

Is vain: already I have done what much

Will hurt thee.

Œnt. Ha! what threats are these? CRE. Thy daughters

Must go with me: one is secured, and now,

This moment will I wrest the other from thee. 720

ŒDI. O me!

I'll give thee much more cause for grief. **EDI.** Hast thou my daughter?

CRE. Ay, and will have this. ŒDI. [to the Chorus.] What will you do, my friends?

Will you forsake me? Will you not drive this vile, abandon'd man

Forth from your city?

Сно. Stranger! hence; away; 725 Thy actions are most shameful and unjust.

CRE. Slaves! do your office; bear her off by force

If she consents not.

Whither shall I fly Ant. For aid? What god or man shall I implore To succour me ?

Alas! what wouldst thou do? 730 Car. I touch not him, but I must have my own. ART. O princes! aid me now. 'Tis most unjust. Сно. CRE. I say 'tis just. Сно. Then prove it. CRE. They are mine. CHO. O citizens! O, loose me! if you do not, You shall repent this violence. Go on: 735 I will defend you. Œdi. He who injures me Offends the city. Сно. Said I not before It would be thus? CRE. [to the Chorus.] Let go the maid this instant. Cho. Command where thou hast power. Let her go. Cно. 'Begone thyself: what, ho! my countrymen! 741 The city is in danger; haste, and save us. [Creon's followers seize on Antigone. ANT. I'm seized, my friends! O, help! Œdi. Where is my daughter? ANT. Torn from thee. ŒDI. O! stretch forth thy hand. Ant. I cannot Cre. Away with her. Œdi. O wretched Œdipus! CRE. No longer shall these tender props support Thy feeble age. Since thou art still resolved, 746 Against thyself, thy country, and thy friends, By whose command I come, remain perverse And obstinate, old man! but know, hereafter, 750 Time will convince thee thou hast ever been Thy own worst foe; thy fiery temper still Must make thee wretched.

D 42

Stranger! stir not hence.

Сно.

CRE. I charge you, touch me not.
CHO. Thou shalt not go Till thou restor'st the virgins.
Cre. I must have
A nobler ransom from your city; these 755
Shall not suffice.
CHO. What mean'st thou!
CRE. He shall go,
This Œdipus.
Cho. Thy threats are terrible.
Cre. I'll do it; and only he who governs here
Shall hinder me.
ŒDI. O insolence! Thou wilt not,
Thou dar'st not, force me.
Cre. Hold thy peace.
Œdi. Not even 760
The dreadful goddesses, who here preside,
Should bind my tongue from heaviest curses on
thee;
For thou hast robb'd me of the only light
These eyes could boast. But may the all-seeing
Behold and punish thee and all thy race, 765
And load thy age with miseries like mine!
Cre. Inhabitants of Athens! hear ye this!
ŒDI. They do, and see that but with fruitless
words
I can repay the injuries I received;
For I am weak with age, and here alone. 776
CRE. No longer will I curb my just resentment,
But force thee hence.
Œdi. O me!
Cно. What boldness, stranger!
Could make thee hope to do a deed like this
Unpunish'd ?
CRE. 'Tis resolved.
Сно. Our Athens then
Is fallen indeed, and is no more a city. 775
CRE. In a just cause the weak may foil the mighty.

ŒDI. Hear how he threatens— CHO. What he'll ne'er perform. CRE. That Jove alone can tell. Shall injuries Like these be suffer'd! CRE. Call it injury Thou mayst; 'tis such as thou perforce must bear. Cно. This is too much: ye rulers of the land! My fellow-citizens! come forth, and save us. Enter THESEUS. THE. Whence is this clamour? Wherefore am I call'd From sacred rites, at Neptune's altar paid. Our guardian god! Say, what's the cause, that thus In haste I'm summon'd hither? Œdi. O my friend! 786 (For well I know thy voice) most cruelly Have I been treated by this man. THE. Who did it? Œdi. This Creon, whom thou seest, hath ravish'd from me My only help, my daughters. THE. Ha! what savest thou? 790 Œdi. 'Tis as I tell thee. THE. [to his attendants.] Quick, despatch my servants: Fly to the altar, summon all my people, Horsemen and foot; give o'er the sacrifice. And instant to the double gate repair, Lest with the virgins'the base ravishers 795 Escape unpunish'd, and my guest, thus injured, Laugh me to scorn for cowardice. Away!

Iturning to Creon.

As my resentment bids, and he deserves,
He should this instant fall beneath my rage: 800
But the same justice he to others deals,
Himself shall meet from us. Thou shalt not go,

Were I to punish this oppressor here

Till those, whom thou didst basely ravish hence, Are brought before me: 'twas unlike thyself. Unworthy of thy country and thy race, 805 To enter thus a cultivated city. Where law and justice reign, with violence And rapine snatching what thy fancy pleased. Or didst thou think I ruled a desert land. Or that my people were a race of slaves, 810 And Theseus but the shadow of a king? Thebes never taught thee such destructive lessons, For she abhors injustice: when she hears That Creon, thus despising sacred laws, Hath taken with brutal violence my right, 815 And would have stolen a wretched suppliant from

She'll not approve thy conduct. Say, I went
To Thebes, how just soever were the cause,
I should not seize on aught without the leave
Of him who govern'd there; but, as becomes
A stranger, bear myself unblamed by all.
Thou hast disgraced thy country and thy friends,
And weight of years hath taken thy senses from
thee.

Again I say, restore the virgins to me,
Or stay with me thyself, for so thou shalt,
Howe'er unwilling. What I've said, remember,
Is what I have resolved; therefore determine.

Cho. [to Creon.] Stranger! thy actions, noble as thou art.

But ill become thy family and name,
Because unjust; but thou behold'st thy fate.

CRE. Theseus! it was not that I thought this city
Without or guards to save, or laws to rule,
Which brought me here, nor unadvised I came;
But that I hoped you never would receive
My kindred here against my will, nor e'er
Embrace a vile, incestuous parricide,

835

Or cherish and protect him, in a land Whose court, renown'd for justice, suffers not

Such poor abandon'd exiles to reside Within its borders; therefore did I this, 840 Which yet I had not done, but for the curses Which he hath pour'd on me and all my race. Revenge inspired me: anger, well thou know'st, Can never be extinguish'd but by death, Which closeth ev'ry wound. At present, Theseus! It must be as thou wilt; my want of power, How just soe'er my cause, demands submission: Yet old and weak, I shall not tamely yield. ŒDI. Audacious man! think'st thou the vile reproach Thou utter'st falls on me or on thyself? 850 Those, who upbraid'st me thus for all my woes, Murder and incest, which against my will I had committed (so it pleased the gods, Offended at my race for former crimes; But I am guiltless); canst thou name a fault 855 Deserving this? For tell me, was it mine, When to my father Phœbus did declare That he should one day perish by the **ban**d Of his own child? Was Œdipus to blame, Who had no being then? If, born at length 860 To wretchedness, he met his sire unknown. And slew him, that involuntary deed Canst thou condemn? And for my fatal marriage, Dost thou not blush to name it! Was not she Thy sister, she who bore me (ignorant 865 And guiltless woman!), afterward my wife, And mother to my children? What she did, She did unknowing, not like thee, who thus Dost purposely upbraid us both. Heaven knows, Unwillingly I wedded her, and now 870 Unwillingly repeat the dreadful tale: But not for that, nor for my murder'd father, Have I deserved thy bitter taunts; for, tell me, Thy life attack'd, wouldst thou have stay'd to ask The assassin if he were thy father! No.

Self-love would urge thee to revenge the insult.

Thus was I drove to ill by the angry gods;
This, should my father's soul revisit earth,
Himself would own, and pity Œdipus.
Thy bold and impious tongue still utters all;
Just or unjust, thou pour'st thy foul reproach
On me, pretending to revere the name
Of Theseus and his country; but, remember,
The city, which thou thus hast praised, is famed
For piety and reverence to the gods;
Yet wouldst thou drive a needy suppliant thence,
And lead him captive. Thou hast stolen my
daughter;

But I implore the dreadful goddesses
-To grant me aid, that thou mayst feel the power
Which thou contemn'st, and know the force of
Athens.

Cно. [to Theseus.] O king! this stranger merits thy regard;

His woes are great; his cause should be defended.

THE. No more; the ravishers are fled with speed,
While we, who suffer, stand inactive here.

Cre. Speak thy commands, for I must yield to thee. 895

Go thou before me; I shall follow close If here thou hast conceal'd the virgins, now Discover them; if hence, to others' hands Committed, they are fled, they shall not 'scape: My servants soon will fetch them back. Remember thy condition, for thy fate 901 Hath caught thee in the net which thou hadst spread For others. But what evil means acquire Is seldom kept: thou cam'st not naked here. Or unattended, thus to do an act 905 Of violence. Ere long, I'll know on what Thou didst rely, nor by a single arm Shall Athens fall ingloriously: hear'st thou this Or are my words unheeded? CRE.

Crr. 'Tis not now
A time to answer: we shall know at home
What must be done.

'Tis not now
910

Thou threaten'st: but go on. Stay thou in quiet here; for if I live,

[turning to Œdipus. I will not rest till I restore thy daughters. [Exeunt Theseus and Creon.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Now the combatants prepare, And hasten to the field of war: 915 Theseus, their great and godlike friend. The hapless virgins shall defend. O! could I hear the dreadful battle roar, Or near Apollo's sacred shrine. Or on the torch-enlighten'd shore, 920 Or, Ceres! where thy priests their rites divine Perform, with lips in solemn silence seal'd, And myst'ries ne'er by mortal tongue reveal'd!

ANTISTROPHE I. At von snowy mountain's feet

Westward perchance the warriors meet; 925 Chariot and horse, with mutual rage,

On Œta's flowery plains engage. Around their Thesens now, a valiant band, See Athens' martial sons unite

To save their native land. All shake their glittering spears, and urge the fight: All, who thy power, equestrian Pallas! own, Or bow to Neptune, Rhea's honour'd son.

STROPHE II.

The bloody scene shall soon be o'er; Creon the virgin shall restore; 935

920 Torches were carried in the Eleusinian rites, probably in memory of those which Ceres and her attendants are supposed to have made use of in their search after Proserpine. These mysteries were performed by night in the most solemn manner by the Eumolpids, or priests of Ceres; and none were admitted to them but the pure and unspotted, who were bound to inviolable secreey.

My soul prophetic sees the maid For pious duty thus repaid; For ever active is the power of Jove, From whom perpetual blessings flow. O! that I now could, like the dove, Soar through the skies, and mark the field below. The wish'd-for conquest joyful to behold, And triumph in the victory I foretold! ANTISTROPHE II. Thou power supreme, all powers above, All-seeing, all-performing Jove! 945 Grant that the rulers of this land May soon subdue the hostile band! Then too, O Pallas! hunter Phœbus! thee Do we invoke; with thee be join'd Thy virgin sister Deity, 950 Who loves o'er lawns to chase the spotted hind: On you we call; your aid propitious bring:

ACT III.

O! haste, protect our country and our king. [Exeunt.

ŒDIPUS, THESEUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

Сно. I'm no false prophet, stranger! for, behold

Thy daughters.

CDI. Ha! what say'st thou! Where! O! where! Ant. My father! O my father! what kind god 956 Raised up this friend, who hath restored us to thee!

ŒDI. Åre then my daughters with me?

Ant. Theseus' arm Hath brought us here; to him and to his friends

We owe our safety.

ŒDI. O! come nigh, my children! 960 Let me embrace you; never did I think

Again to fold you in these arms.

ANT. We come

With joy, my father!

ŒDI. O! where are you?

Ant. Here. **CEDI.** My dearest children! To our father still May every pleasure come! ŒDI. [leaning on Antigone.] My best support! 965 Ant. The wretched bear the wretched. ŒDI. [embracing them.] I have all That's precious to me: were I now to die, While you are here, I should not be unhappy. Support me, daughters! to your father's side Close press'd; O! sooth to peace a wretched exile, Long time deserted: tell me what hath happen'd; But let the tale be short, as best becomes Thy tender age. Ant. [pointing to Theseus.] Here is our great protector. He will inform you; so shall what I speak Be brief as thou wouldst have it. Œdi. Noble Theseus! 975 My children thus beyond my hopes restored, If I should talk too long on such a theme, Thou wilt not wonder. 'Tis to thee alone I owe my joys; thou didst protect and save My much-loved daughters. May the gods repay 980 Thee and thy kingdom for this goodness to me! Here only have I found or faith, or truth, Or justice; you alone possess them all: I will attest it, for I know it well. I feel your virtues; what I have is all 985 From you. O king! permit me but to touch : Thy hand; O! stretch it forth, or let me kiss Thy honour'd lips! But, O! what do I say! Can such a wretch as Œdipus e'er hope, With guilty hands, to touch a man like thee, So pure, so spotless? Yet I must embrace thee: They only who have known misfortunes feel For others' griefs with sympathising wo. Hail, best of men; and mayst thou ever be,

As thou hast been, my guardian and my friend \ 985

SOPH.—E e

THE. Thus happy as thou must be in thy children, Hadst thou said more, much more, and talk'd to them

Rather than me, it had not moved my wonder.

Nor think I should resent it; not by words

Would Theseus be distinguish'd, but by deeds 1000

Illustrious: this thou know'st; for what I swore
I have perform'd, restored thy daughters to thee,
Safe from the tyrant's threats; how passed the conflict

Why should I boast? They at their leisure best May tell you all: meantime to what I heard, 1005 As hither coming, Œdipus attend;

Of little import seem'd the circumstance,

And yet 'twas strange: but naught should mortal man

Deem or beneath his notice or his care.

ŒDI. What is it, son of Ægeus? O! inform me, For nothing have I heard.

THE. A man, they say, 1011
Who boasts himself by blood allied to thee,
At Neptune's altar, while I sacrificed,

In humblest posture stood..

ŒDI. What could it mean ?

Whence came he?

THE. That I know not: this alone 1015
They told me; suppliant he requested much
To talk awhile with thee.

ŒDI. With me ? 'Tis strange, And yet, methinks, important.

THE. He desired

But to converse with thee, and then depart. ŒDI. Who can it be?

THE. Hast thou no friend at Argos! 1020
None of thy kindred there who wish'd to see
thee!

ŒDI. No more, my friend!

THE. What say'st thou?

ŒDI. Do not ask me.

THE. Ask what— ŒDI. I know him now; I know too well Who's at the altar. Who is it? THE. ŒDI. My son : That hateful son, whose voice I loath to hear. 1025 THE. But why not hear him? Still thou mayst refuse What he shall ask. Œdi. I cannot, cannot bear it: Do not oblige me. But the sacred place THE. Where now he stands, and reverence to the gods, Demand it of thee. Ant. Let me, O my father! 1030 Young as I am, admonish thee. O! grant Thy friend his just request; obey the gods, And let our brother come; whate'er he says, It need not draw thee from thy first resolve. What harm to hear him? Words have oft produced 1035 The noblest works; remember, 'tis thy child: Thou didst beget him; though he were the worst Of sons to thee, yet would it ill become A father to return it. Let him come. 1039 Others, like thee, have base, unworthy children, And yet their minds are soften'd to forgiveness By friends' advice, and all their wrath subdued. Think on thy own unhappy parent's fate; Thence mayst thou learn what dreadful ills have fow'd From anger's bitter fountain. Thou, alas! 1045 Art a sad proof; those sightless eyes too well Bear witness to it: those who only ask What justice warrants should not ask in vain; Nor who receives a benefit forget

The hand that gave, but study to repay it. 1050

(Epr. You have o'ercome me: with reluctant pleasure

I yield: my children! be it as you please:
But if he comes, O Theseus! guard my life.
The. I've said enough; no more; I will not boast;
But thou art safe, if Heaven forsakes not me. 1055

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

In sacred wisdom's path is seldom seen
The wretch whom sordid love of wealth inspires;
Neglectful of the happy golden mean,
His soul nor truth nor heavenly knowledge fires.
No length of days to him can pleasure bring;
In death alone he finds repose,
End of his wishes and his woes,

In that uncomfortable night,
Where never music's charms delight,
Nor virgin choirs their nymeneals sing.

ANTISTROPHE.

1065

The happiest fate of man is not to be;
And next in bliss is he who, soon as born,
From the vain world and all its sorrows free,

Shall whence he came with speediest foot return: For youth is full of folly, toils, and wo, 1070

Of war, sedition, pain, and strife, With all the busy ills of life; Till helpless age comes creeping on.

Deserted, friendless, and alone,
Which neither power, nor joy, nor pleasure knows.

The hapless Œdipus, like me, 1076
Is doom'd to age and misery;
Ev'n as around the northern shore
The bleak winds howl, and tempests roar,
Contending storms in terror meet,
And dashing waves for ever beat;

Thus is the wretched king with grief oppress'd,

And woes on woes afflict his long-distemper'd breast.

(Execut.

ACT IV.

CEDIPUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

ANT. This way, my father! Lo! the wretched man

Approaches, unattended and in tears.

1085

Œdi. Who comes, my child? Ant. Ev'

Ev'n he I told thee of,

Poor Polynices.

Enter POLYNICES.

Pol. O my sisters! see Of all mankind the most unhappy. Where Shall I begin? Shall I lament my own, Or shall I weep an aged parent's fate? 1090 For O! 'tis horrible to find him thus A wandering exile in a foreign land; In this mean garb with wild dishevell'd hair, Bereft of sight, and destitute, perhaps, Of needful food and nourishment. Alas! 1095 Too late I know it, worthless as I am; I flew to succour him, to plead my cause, That not from others he might hear the tale Of my misfortunes: sacred Pity sits Fast by the throne of Jove, o'er all his works 1100 Presiding gracious: 0! let her inspire Thy breast, my father! Crimes already done, Which cannot be recall'd, may still be heal'd By kind forgiveness: why then art thou silent? O! speak, my father! do not turn aside; Wilt thou not answer? Wilt thou let me go Without one word, nor tell me whence thy wrath Contemptuous springs? My sisters! you at least Will try to move his unrelenting heart, And loose his closed lips; that, not thus spurn'd And thus unanswered, though a suppliant here 1111

E e 2

Ī.

At Neptune's altar, I return with shame And foul disgrace.

Art. Say, wherefore didst thou come?
My hapless brother! tell thy mournful tale:
Such is the power of words, that whether sweet
They move soft pity, or when bitter urge
1116
To violence and wrath, at least they ope

To violence and wrath, at least they ope The unwilling lips, and make the silent speak. Pol. 'Tis well advised, and I will tell thee all. O! may that deity propitious smile. Whose altar late I left, whence Theseus raised This wretched suppliant, and in converse free Mix'd gracious with me! May I hope from you The like benevolence! And now, my father! I'll tell thee wherefore Polynices came: 1125 Thou seest me banish'd from my native land, Unjustly banish'd, for no other crime, But that I strove to keep the throne of Thebes, By birthright mine, from him who drove me thence, The young Eteocles: not his the claim 1130 By justice, nor to me his fame in arms Superior; but by soft, persuasive arts He won the rebel city to his love. Thy curse, my father, was the cause of all, I know it was; for so the priests declared 1135 In oracles divine: to Argos then I came, and to Adrastus' daughter join'd In marriage, gain'd the Argive chiefs, renown'd For martial deeds. Seven valiant leaders march To Thebes, resolved to conquer or to die. 1140 Therefore to thee, my father! came I here, To beg thy aid for me and these my friends, Companions of the war, who threaten Thebes With their united powers, in order thus: The wise and brave Amphiaraus, or skill'd 1145 To cast the spear, or with prophetic tongue Disclose the will of Heaven, with Œneus' son, Etolian Tydeus, and Eteocles, At Argos born; to these, Hippomedon

Sent by Talaua, his renowned sire, 1150 Bold Capaneus, who threatens soon to raze The walls of mighty Thebes: to close the train. Parthenopæan Arcas comes, the son Of Atalantis, from her virgin name So call'd: with these, thy hapless son (the child Of dire misfortune rather) leads his force From Argos to rebellious Thebes: for these, And for their children, for the lives of all, Suppliant to thee we come, in humble prayer, To deprecate thy wrath against a wretch, Who, injured much, but seeks the vengeance due To a base brother, whose oppressive hand Hath drove me from my country and my throne. If there be truth in what the gods declare, On him shall victory smile, for whom thy yows 1165 Shall rise propitious; therefore, by our gods And native fountains, O! remit thy anger, And smile upon me, on a banish'd man, A beggar like thyself, who lives, like thee, 1170 By others' bounty; in one common fate We are united, while the tyrant sits In ease at home, and laughs our woes to scorn. Yet if thou wouldst but listen to my vows, Soon might I cast him forth, restore thee soon To thy dear native land, and seat myself In my own kingdom. Thy assent, my father! Is all I ask; but, O! without thy aid I have no hope of safety or revenge.

Cho. For Theseus' sake, O! give him answer now, And let him go.

CED. But that the noble Theseus, 1180 Who hither brought him, did request it of me, He ne'er had heard the voice of Œdipus; And little pleasure will it now bestow. Ungrateful wretch! who, when the throne of Thebes, [turning to Polynices. Where now thy brother sits, wast thine, didst drive Thy father heace to penury and wo;

Now, when thou seest me in this mean attire,
Thou weep'st my fate, because 'tis like thy own.
But I'll not weep, for I can bear it all.
Still, wicked particide! remembering thee,
The cruel cause of all: thou mad'st me thus
On others' bounty to rely for food
And nourishment: for thee, I might have perish'd;
But these my pious daughters, these alone,
Beyond their sex's power, with manly aid
Have cherish'd and protected me: for you,
Who call yourselves my sons, ye are not mine;
I know you not. Though Heaven hath spared you

long. Death will o'ertake you; when thy forces come To Thebes, which shall not fall before thy arms, There soon shalt thou and thy vile brother die. Long since my curses did declare thy fate. Which here I do repeat, that you may learn The reverence due to parents, and no more Reproach a sightless father. Look on these My duteous daughters: did they act like you? They never did; and therefore to the throne, Which you have forfeited, shall they succeed. If Justice still, as she is ever wont, Sits at the hand of Jove: meantime, thou worst, Thou most abandon'd of the race of men! 1211 Begone! away! and with thee bear this curse, Which here I do pronounce: to Argos ne'er Mayst thou return! never may Thebes be thine! Soon mayst thou perish by a brother's hand, Slaying the slayer! May dark Erebus Receive them both! And now on you I call. Ye goddesses revered! and thou, O Mars! Thou, who hast raised the bitter strife between My impious sons, bear witness to my words! Farewell: now go, and tell the Thebans, tell Thy faithful friends, how fair an heritage Your Œdipus hath here bequeathed his children. CHO. O Polynices! little is the joy

Which we can give thee of this fatal journey: 1925 Therefore away, and leave us. Pot. These steps have trod indeed, of wo to me And to my friends. Was it for this, alas! I came from Argos! I can never tell My mournful story there, never return. 1230 O! I must bury it in silence all. My sisters! ye have heard the dreadful curse Which he pronounced. O! if it be fulfilled, And some kind hand restore you back to Thebes, At least remember me : at least perform 1235 The funeral rites, and hide me in the tome: So shall your names, for pious tenderness To an unhappy father long revered, With added praises crown'd, exalted shine, 1940 For this kind office to a brother's shade. Ant. O Polynices! let me beg thee, hear Thy sister now. Pol. My dear Antigone! What sav'st thou? ANT. Lead thy armies back to Argos. Nor thus destroy thy country and thyself. Por. It cannot be; my forces, once dismiss'd 1245 Through fear, what power shall e'er reunite them! ANT. But wherefore all this rage! What canst thou hope Of fame or profit by the fall of Thebes! Pol. Tis base to fly, and, eldest born as I am, To be the laughter of a younger brother. ANT. Dost thou not dread the oracles pronounced Against you both, death by each other's hand? Pol. I know the sentence, but we must go on. Ant. Alas! and who shall dare to follow thee, After this dire prediction ? None shall know it, 1255 The prudent general tells the good alone, And keeps the threaten'd ill unknown to all.

Art. Art thou determined then, and wilt thou go?

Pol. Do not dissuade me, for the task is mine; And though a father's fatal curse attend me. Though vengeful Furies shall await my steps, Yet I must go. May Jove indulgent smile On you, my sisters! if, when I am dead (As soon I shall be), to my breathless corpse You pay due honours! Now farewell for ever, For living ye shall ne'er again behold me. 1266 ANT. Alas, my brother! Do not weep for me. Ant. Who would not weep to see thee rushing thus On certain death? Pol. If I must die, I must Ant. Yet be persuaded. Ask me not to do 1270 A deed unworthy of me.
Losing thee, I shall be most unhappy. To the gods Alone belong the fate of mortals; some Are born to happiness, and some to wo. You may they guard from every ill, for sure 1275 Ye merit all the good they can bestow. Exit POLYNICES. Сно. Fresh sorrows hath this hapless stranger brought On me and all; but so hath Heaven decreed. Which nothing doth in vain; while time beholds And orders all, inflicting wo on wo: But hark! the thunder roars: almighty Jove! ŒDI. My daughters! O my daughters! who will bring The noble Theseus here, that best of men? Ant. Wherefore, my father! should we call him **EDI.** This winged lightning from the arm of Jove

Must bear me to the shades below. Where's The-

Let him be sent for instantly.

Сно. Again! Another dreadful clap! It strikes my soul With horror, and my hairs do stand on end With fear. Behold, again the lightnings flash! 1290 I dread the consequence, for not in vain These signs appear, of some calamity Portentous ever. O, ethereal Jove! ŒDI. Alas, my children! naught can save me now: The fatal hour of my departure hence 1295 Draws nigh. Why think'st thou so? ANT. Œni.

ŒDI. I know it well:

Cho.

Alas!
The thunder rolls on every side. Good Heaven
Protect us! If to this devoted land
It bodes destruction, let not ruin fall
On me! O let not that be our reward
For pitying thus a poor deserted stranger!
O Jove! on thee we call; protect and save us!
CEDI. Is Theseus come! Shall he once more
behold me,

While yet I live, and keep my perfect mind? 1305 Сно. What secret hast thou to reveal to him? Сы. I owe him much, and would repay his goodness.

Ev'n as I promised him.

CHOO, haste, my son!
At Neptune's altar leave the sacrifice,
And hither fly; for Œdipus, to thee
And to thy country grateful, waits to pay
Thy bounties: haste, O Theseus, to receive them.

Enter THESEUS.

THE. Again this noise, this wild astonishment, Among you all ¹ Was Œdipus the cause, Or did the bolt of Jove, and rushing hail, 1315 Affright you? When the god in raging storms Descends thus dreadful, we have cause to fear

Propitious led thee hither. The. Son of Laius! What new event hath happen'd! Edd. Know, my life 1320 At length is verging to its latest hour. I wish to die; but first my vows to thee And to this city faithful must perform. The. But who hath told thee thou so soon shalt die! Edd. Edd. Edd. By signs infallible have warn'd me of it. The. How spake they to thee! Edd. In repeated thunder And lightning, from the all-powerful hand of Jove. The. I do believe thee, for thy prophecies Were never false: but say, what must be done! Edd. O son of Ægeus! I will tell thee all 1331 The bliss reserved for thee in thy age; For thee, and for thy country: I must go To my appointed place, and there shall die. I go without a guide, nor must thou tell To mortal ear where Œdipus doth lie, For ever hid. O king! that sacred place Shall be thy sure defence, and better far Than many a shield, or all the social aid Of firm alliance in the field of war: What more remains, unutterable now, Of higher import, thither when thou com'st, To thee alone shall be deliver'd; naught Shall I reveal, or to the citizens, Or ev'n to these, beloved as they are, My pious daughters. Thou must ever keep The solemn secret; only, when thy life	ŒDI. O king! thou com'st in happy hour; a	some
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My pious daughters. Thou must ever keep		1245
		1949
Draws near its end, disclose it to thy son,	Draws near its end, disclose it to thy son.	
Heir of thy kingdom, and to him alone:	Heir of the kingdom, and to him alone	
From king to king thus shall the tale devolve. 1350		1350

And thus thy Athens be for ever safe.

From Theban force: even the best of cities,
Where justice rules, may swerve from virtue's
laws,

And be oppressive; but the gods, though late,
Will one day punish all who disobey 1355
Their sacred mandates: therefore, son of Ægeus!
Be careful, and be just; but this to thee
I need not say. Quick, let us to the place,
For so the gods decree: there must I go, 1359
Thence never to return. Come then, my daughters!
Long have ye been my pious guides; henceforth
I must be yours; follow, but touch me not.
Let me find out the tomb where I must hide
My poor remains; that way my journey lies.

[pointing with his hand.
Away! Thou god of shades, great Mercury, 1365
And Proserpine, infernal powers, conduct me!
O sightless eyes, where are ye! Never more
Shall these hands touch your unavailing orbs.
O light and life! farewell: at length I go
To hide me in the tomb; but, O! for thee,
My best beloved friend! and this fair land,
And these thy subjects;—may prosperity
Attend you still; and may you sometimes deign,
Amid your bliss, to think on Œdipus!

[Execunt.

CHORUS.

Goddess invisible! on thee we call,

If thee we may invoke, Proserpina! and thee,
Great Pluto, king of shades! O grant,
That not, oppress'd by torturing pain,
Beneath the stroke of death he linger long;
But swift, with easy steps, descend
To Styx's drear abode;
For he hath led a life of toil and pain.
May the just gods repay his undeserved wo!
Ye goddesses revered! who dwell
Beneath the earth deep hid; and thou

Who, barking from the gloomy cave, Unconquer'd Cerberus! guard'st the ghosts below; On thee, O son of Tartarus! we call, For thou art ever wakeful: lead, O! lead To thy dark mansions this unhappy stranger. Exeunt.

ACT V.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MES. O citizens! I come to tell a tale— But to be brief, know, Œdipus is dead. To speak the manner and strange circumstance Of his departure, will require more words, And calls for your attention. Сно. Is he gone? 1395

Unhappy man!

For ever hath he left Mes.

The path of life.

How died he! By the hand Сно. Of Heaven dismiss'd, without disease or pain? MES. O! 'twas a scene of wonder: how he left This plain, and self-conducted, led us on, Blind as he was, ye all remembered well. Soon as he came to where the craggy steep, With brazen steps, leads to the hollow gulf, Where various paths unites, a place renown'd For the famed league of Theseus and his friend, 1405 Between Acherdus and the Thracian rock. On a sepulchral stone he sat him down; Pull'd off the filthy weeds he long had worn, And bade his daughters instantly prepare The bath and splendid garb: with hasty steps 1410 To Ceres' neighbouring alter they repair Obedient, bring the vessel, and the robe Funereal. All things done, as custom bids For dying men, sudden a dreadful clap Of thunder shook the ground: the virgins trembled.

And, clinging fearful round their father's knees. 1416 Beat their sad breasts, and wept. Soon as he heard The sound portentous, he embraced his daughters: "Children," he cried, "your father is no more; No longer shall you lead a life of pain, No longer toil for Œdipus. 'Twas dreadful to you; but this day, my children! Shall end your sorrows and my life together. Never did father love his daughters more Than I have loved, but henceforth you must live Without your Œdipus: farewell for ever!" He spake, and long, in sad embraces join'd, They wept aloud: at length did clamorous grief To silent sorrow yield, and all was still; When suddenly we heard a voice, that oft 1430 Repeated, "Œdipus! why this delay! Where art thou, Œdipus ?" The wretched king. Attentive to the call of Heaven, desired That Theseus might be sent for: Theseus came: When thus the dying exile:—"O my friend! Give me thy hand; my daughters! give him yours; Let this, my dearest Theseus! be the pledge Of amity between you: promise here That you will ne'er forsake my hapless children. But henceforth cherish, comfort, and protect them." The generous king, in pity to their woes, 1441 Vow'd to perform what Œdipus desired. The father threw his feeble arms around His weeping children:- "You," he cried, "must learn To bear your sufferings with an equal mind, 1445 And leave this place; for not to mortal eye Is given to see my future late: away, Theseus alone must stay, and know it all." This did we hear him utter, as we stood Attentive; when his duteous daughters left him. 1450 And went their way: we wept, and follow'd them. Soon we return'd, but Œdipus was gone: The king alone remaining, as if struck

With terror at some dreadful spectacle,
Had with his hand o'erveil'd his downcast eye. 1455
A little after we beheld him bend
In humble adoration to the earth.
And then to Heaven prefer his ardent prayer.
How the poor exile perish'd, none can tell
But Theseus: nor the fiery blast of Jove 1460
Destroy'd, nor sea o'erwhelm'd him; but from
Heaven

Some messenger divine did snatch him hence; Or power infernal bade the pitying earth Open her peaceful bosom to receive him. Without a groan, disease, or pain, he fell: 1465 'Twas wondrous all: to those who credit not This strange report, I answer, 'tis most true.

Cno. Where are his daughters, with their weeping friends

Who follow'd them?

MES. They cannot be far off: The voice of grief I hear proclaims them nigh. 1470

Enter Antigone, Ismene, with Attendants.

Ant. Alas! the time is come, when we must weep

Our father's fate, the fate of all his race, Long since unhappy: various were the toils, The labours we endured; but this is far, Far above all, unutterable wo.

1475

Сно. What is it ?

Ant. O! it cannot be conceived.

Сно. Is he then dead?

ANT. He is: his death was strange
And wonderful; for not in war he fell,
Nor did the sea o'erwhelm him, but the earth
Hath hid him from us; deadly night hath closed 1480
Our eyes in sadness. Whether o'er the seas
We roam, or exiles in a foreign land
Lead our sad days, we must be still unhappy.

Alas! I only wish I might have died

With my poor father: wherefore should I ask 1485 For longer life?

Cho. Ye good and pious daughters? Remember, what the will of Heaven decrees, With patience we must bear; indulge not, then, Excess of grief; your fate hath not deserved it.

ANT. O! I was fond of misery with him:
Ev'n what was most unlovely grew beloved,
When he was with me. O my dearest father!
Beneath the earth now in deep darkness hid,
Worn as thou wert with age, to me thou still
Wert dear, and shalt be ever.

Сно. Now his course 1495 Is finish'd.

ANT. Even as he wish'd, he died In a strange land, for such was his desire; A shady turf cover'd his lifeless limbs:

Nor unlamented fell; for, O! these eyes, My father! still shall weep for thee, nor time 1500

E'er blot thee from my memory.
Ism.

Alas, my sister! what must be our fate, Forlorn and helpless, of our father thus Bereft!

CHO. His end was happy; therefore cease Your fruitless tears: from sorrow none is free. 1505 Ant. Let us be gone.

Ism. But where?

Ant. I wish—

Ism. O! what!

Ant. To see the tomb.

Ism. Whose tomb?

ANT. Our father's. O! Ism. But is it lawful? Know'st thou that?

Ant. Why thus

Reprove me, my Ismene !

Ism. He is yet

Unburied, and without—

Ant.

O! lead me there, 1510

F f 2

Then kill me if thou wilt; for where, alas! Can I betake me! Friends! be comforted. Сно. Ant. Where shall I fly ? Thou hast already 'scaped Unnumber'd ills. I'm thinking, my Ismene!— Ant. Ism. What think'st thou! ANT. How we shall get home. Сно. No more; Thou hast been long familiar with affliction. 1516 Ant. My life hath ever been a life of pain And sorrow, but this far exceeds them all. Cно. The storm beats hard upon you. O! it doth. Ant. Cно. I know it must. O! whither shall we fly ? 1520 Great Jove! what hope remains? Сно. Suppress your griefs; We should not weep for those who wish'd to die, And meet their fate with pleasure; 'tis not just Nor lawful to lament them.

[Exeunt Messenger and Attendants.

Enter Theseus.

Ant. Son of Ægeus! Suppliant to thee we come. THE. What would ye of me? ANT. Permit us but to see our father's tomb. 1526 THE. It is not lawful. ANT. O! what say'st thou, king? THE. Know, pious virgins! Œdipus himself Forbade that any should approach his tomb: That sacred spot which he possesses there 1530 No mortal must profane: to me, he said, If careful I perform'd his last command, Should joy and safety come, with victory And peace to Athens: this your gods did hear Confirm'd by the sacred oath of Jove. 1535

Ant. If such our father's will, we must submit: But O! permit us to revisit Thebes,
That so we may prevent the impending fate
Of our dear brothers.

THE. All that you request,
Or may be grateful to that honour'd shade,
Whose memory we revere, I freely grant;
For I must not be weary of my task.

Cho. Remember, virgins! to repress your sorrows, And cease your fruitless grief; for know, 'tis all Decreed by fate, and all the work of Heaven. 1545

END OF SOPHOCLES.

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C10 C





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